# P.S. to the NEWS
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HELMS' APPEAL TO PRINCIPLE

Senator Jesse Helms' speech on the final day of the Republican National Convention didn't make any headlines because it was in competition for the day's news with Ronald Reagan's acceptance speech. But it filled an essential need in that Convention like Ronald Reagan's speech on the final day of the 1976 Convention in Kansas City.

After Gerald Ford's acceptance speech in 1976, he spontaneously turned the microphone over to Reagan, and the former actor starred in one of politics' most dramatic moments. Without a script or a teleprompter, Reagan told his supporters that the challenge to our country's survival could be met only if they continue to work for the same principles which brought them to Kansas City and led them to write a strong Platform.

In defeat, Reagan displayed his dedication to a cause larger than his own candidacy. He showed that he understood that most of the Reagan Delegates in Kansas City had come because of principle rather than personality or patronage.

It was clear at the 1976 Convention that Ford's nomination by the slim margin of 117 votes resulted from the backing of prominent officeholders, party officials, and the media. There were major differences of principle, policy and politics between Reagan's and Ford's supporters.

In 1980, many of the same people who had backed Ford in 1976 lined up with Ford, George Bush, John Connally, or others. But Reagan's strength among grassroots volunteers had grown so tremendously that he overwhelmed all his opponents in the primaries.

Senator Helms explained in his speech why Reagan was the runaway winner of the 1980 primaries: "Ronald Reagan was selected as the candidate of the primaries and of the Convention not because he is a warm and attractive leader; not because he had a skillful campaign team; not merely because he had a splendid record as Governor of California. Ronald Reagan was nominated because he has resolutely and unfailingly stood up for the principles of Americans who want to make our nation great again, morally, militarily, and economically."

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Senator Helms ticked off the issues which the Reagan/Helms followers are concerned about -- concerned enough to spend their own time, money and effort to run for Delegate to the Republican National Convention, a job which pays neither fee nor expenses. He listed the arrogance of the courts in legalizing abortion but prohibiting prayers in public schools, the corruption of education, the assault on family values and parental authority, government-induced inflation, foreign handouts to Communist governments, the giveaway of the Panama Canal, and the failure to maintain a U.S. defense stronger than Russia's, or even as strong.

To Senator Helms and his constituency, these are moral, not merely political, issues. The Reagan Delegates were not seeking jobs in a Reagan Administration; they were demanding that the right solutions be provided for moral questions.

Most of the pre-primary Reagan supporters worked against George Bush in the primaries, and against his selection as Vice President, prefering Helms, Jack Kemp, or Philip Crane. They are not moved by appeals to "party unity" and they are not intimidated by media labels such as "rightwing," "leftwing" or "moderate."

Helms, in his speech, spoke directly to wnat he calls the "new majority" made up of the Middle Americans who have been disillusioned about liberal policies at home and abroad, and are willing to enter the political process to do something about it. These people are ready to follow Ronald Reagan because he speaks a language they identify with and expresses a sincerity on which they can rely.

To the people who care about principle, Party Platforms are important. The New Majority was pleased that George Bush announced his complete support of the 1980 Platform, and they responded enthusiastically to the Helms' recitation of the final paragraph from the conclusion of Reagan's 1976 Convention speech:

"The individuals on the stage may change, but the cause is there, and the cause will prevail because it is right. So don't give up your ideals, don't compromise. Don't turn to expedience. And don't, for heaven's sake, don't get cynical. Look at yourselves, and what you were willing to do -- and recognize that there are millions and millions of Americans out there who want what you want, who want it to be that way, who want it to be a shining city on a hill."

(end)