

CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

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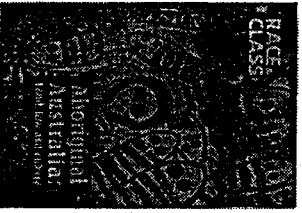
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The Power Elite at the Bohemian Grove: Has Anything Changed in the 1990s?

Kevin Wehr

ABSTRACT: This study examines the social, economic, and political connections of persons attending the elite summer retreat at the Bohemian Grove in 1993. Consistent with past studies, Bohemian Club members who made political contributions were overwhelmingly pro-Republican. The guest list also revealed numerous father-son connections, business affiliations, and government-industry associations, lending support to the idea that the Bohemian Grove is an arena where social interaction serves to develop ruling-class cohesion. Interestingly, Clinton administration appointees were noticeably absent from the Grove.

The Bohemian Grove is a place of power and prestige. Located in the redwoods of Northern California, it is the retreat grounds of the exclusive Bohemian Club of San Francisco. It has been claimed by Domhoff (1974) that membership in the club represents a cross-section of the power elite, the leadership group of the ruling class in America. However, this work was done 20 years ago during Republican administrations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the situation has not changed significantly (Weiss, 1989; Domhoff, 1981). However, there is a need for a systematic update.

This study presents new information on the Bohemian Grove as a playground for the powerful by looking at the presidential campaign contributions of club members from five key states in the 1992 federal elections and at the business and government affiliations of the guests at the 1993 summer retreat.

Cowell College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. The author would like to thank G. William Domhoff for his comments and suggestions on this research note.

Campaign Finance Analysis

Using 1968 campaign finance data, Domhoff (1974:32) found that only 13 percent of Bohemian Club members gave to either presidential campaign. Further, he reported that 90 percent of the donations were to Republicans.

The present study utilized the Federal Election Commission listing of individual contributions for the states which represent the bulk of members in the Bohemian Club: California, New York, Connecticut, Illinois, and the District of Columbia. Only 8 percent of members gave, which is consistent with Domhoff's 1968 findings and other studies of the low rates of giving by club members, corporate directors, and wealthy families (Alexander, 1972; Domhoff, 1972; Allen and Broyles, 1989; Webber, 1990).

The Bohemians from the five key states who donated at the presidential level overwhelmingly supported the Bush campaign and gave more money on average than those who supported Clinton or Perot. One hundred forty-two members, 91 percent of the total, gave \$235,150 to Bush, an average gift of \$1,656. By contrast, eleven members gave \$8,750 to Clinton, an average of \$795. Only three members gave a total of \$459 to Perot. Two members gave to multiple candidates; one gave \$1,000 to Clinton and \$500 to Bush, and the other gave \$2,000 to Bush and \$131 to Perot.

A closer look at the eleven Democratic donors suggests that they are consistent with earlier studies. Four were from the Jewish community, which has been suggested in other studies to provide a large minority of major Democratic donors (Fuchs, 1956; Domhoff, 1972; Isaacs, 1974; Lipset and Raab, 1984; Cohen, 1989). Three others were former Democratic appointees, one of whom, Henry H. Fowler, was the Secretary of the Treasury under Lyndon B. Johnson and a partner at Goldman Sachs on Wall Street. Another, Francis Wheat, was a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission under Lyndon B. Johnson. The third, Harold Brown, was the Secretary of Defense under Jimmy Carter. All but two of the donors to Clinton's campaign were from California.

The Guest List

The guest list shows the names of all the guests and their hosts, and thus makes it possible to search for patterns within elite groups. Domhoff (1974:40) claims that guest lists would be invaluable documents for studying cohesion within the nation's elite, should the lists be available over time.

Republican presidents or candidates have been regular guests since the turn of the century, if they were not already members (Van der

Zee, 1974; Domhoff, 1974). However, even at the height of the New Deal in 1934, the guest list included Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior for Franklin D. Roosevelt (Ickes, 1953). Most members of the Reagan's cabinet were guests during the 1980s (Domhoff, 1981; Weiss, 1989); many of those in Reagan's higher administration have been long-time members through their previous business connections.

Analyzing the 1970 guest list, Domhoff (1974:40-43) claimed that many guests fit into the following three classifications: father-son connections, business affiliations, and government-industry associations. There were still many examples of father-son connections in the 1993 guest list. For example, William M. Rees brought his son, William M. Rees, Jr. This can be understood as an introduction—a debutante ball for the male offspring of the power elite.

There were also many examples of business affiliations in 1993. Members of corporate boards, cronies from college, associates of private councils and think-tanks, and powerful men in connected industries use the Grove as a stomping ground. For example, Henry H. Fowler of Cave Man camp (the camp of the late Richard Nixon and Herbert Hoover), former Secretary of the Treasury and limited partner at Goldman Sachs investment company, invited Roy C. Smith IV, lawyer and also a limited partner at Goldman Sachs. The glue and the go-betweens of the power elite are lawyers and investment bankers (Mills, 1956). Often the member-guest connection has to do with a banker or lawyer inviting an important client to vacation at the Grove. Examples of these connections are numerous. To detail one instance, John H. F. Haskell, Jr., managing director and investment banker with Dillon, Read sponsored James K. Baker, CEO of Arvin Industries, a Fortune 500 company.

There were also Republicans from past administrations who were hosts or guests. Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense under Bush, was the guest of George R. Roberts, a venture capitalist from Uplifters camp. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State under Nixon, brought Charles R. Lee, a fellow Harvard graduate who now consults for U.S. Steel. From James Baker to George Shultz, former officials make up a core of active members at the Grove.

However, there were no members of the Clinton administration who were hosts or guests. The eleven donors to the Clinton campaign sponsored several guests, none of whom had any connections with the Clinton administration specifically, although Robert Trent Jones, Jr. brought Peter G. Kelly, who has been an active member in the Democratic National Committee for many years. Reinforcing these findings, my study of the major Clinton appointees shows no members of the Bohemian Club.

Conclusions

There are both similarities and differences between this study and past findings. Campaign contributions show that Club members who gave donations are still overwhelmingly pro-Republican. The 1993 guest list shows father-son connections and business affiliations. These findings lend support to the idea that the Bohemian Grove is an arena where processes of social interaction can help develop ruling-class cohesion.

However, Democrats are missing from the Grove, including Clinton appointees. Rather than showing that Democratic donors and Clinton appointees are integral members of the power elite, this study suggests that Democrats may represent the "out-groups" within the power elite. It will be interesting to see if more Democratic appointees appear at the Grove in the future years of the Clinton administration.

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Beyond Hyper-Constructivist Fads and Foibles: Toward a Critical Sociology of Science, Technology and the Environment

Zaheer Baber

Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society, by Stanley Aronowitz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Marxism and Ecology, by Reiner Grundmann. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits, by Andrew Ross. New York: Verso, 1991.

Ever since the pioneering work of Robert Merton in the late 1930s, sociology of science has emerged and flourished as a distinct sub-discipline. Although Merton, together with his students and colleagues at Columbia was largely instrumental in providing the intellectual and institutional support for the young field of sociology of science, his work was not without precedent. In fact, Merton's doctoral dissertation, published in 1937 as *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, relied rather extensively on the work of the Soviet Marxist Boris Hessen (1932). Merton's early work applied Max Weber's "Protestant ethic" thesis to the development of the "spirit" of modern science in seventeenth century England. In so doing, Merton imparted a functionalist veneer on Weber's thesis and blended it with Hessen's Marxian analysis of the interconnections between the emerging economic and social structures and the development of Newton's scientific theories.

Given the fact that Marxist metatheory constituted an integral component of a field that eventually came to be labeled as "sociology