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By GERALD F. SEIB

Who Will Muster Christian Army In Reed's Wake?

A couple of years ago, congressional Democrats embarked on a dubious strategy. They decided to launch a public attack on Christian conservatives, seemingly painting them all as Republican extremists.

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition and the very person-



ification of Christian conservatism, responded immediately. But then something interesting happened. Privately, congressional Republicans urged Mr. Reed to pull back and let them take the lead in defending Christian conservatives.

Shrewdly, Mr. Reed agreed. That produced two results. First, the defense of Christian conservatives was more credible because it was coming from somebody else. Second, the bonds between Republicans and the Christian conservative movement grew tighter, because activists saw people in the suspect Washington establishment actually rising to their defense.

It was a small turn in the political wars, to be sure, but one that shows why Mr. Reed has been so good at his job with the Christian Coalition. Now, though, Mr. Reed has said he's leaving to form his own political consulting firm. The big question now is this: Can somebody else in the social conservative movement take Ralph Reed's place?

For now, the answer is probably no. Mr. Reed brings to the table a unique mix of political savvy, grass-roots power and soothing telegenic presence. Others share pieces of this package, but nobody has quite the same combination.



Gary Bauer

Pat Robertson, Mr. Reed's boss at the Christian Coalition, has grass-roots power, but an aura many find frightening. Christian broadcaster James Dobson also has grass-roots power through his formidable radio network and his Focus on the Family organization, but nothing like Mr. Reed's political savvy. Empower America's William Bennett has political savvy and telegenic power aplenty, but his roots are Catholic rather than evangelical Protestant. Mr. Reed's successor as daily manager of the Christian Coalition will have the grass-roots network, but without the Reed political reputation.

The man who may come closest to matching the Ralph Reed package is Gary Bauer, the head of Washington's Family Research Council. He has been alternately a rival and ally of Mr. Reed, and now seems likely to become a more visible spokesman for Christian conservatives. But in important respects, even he is no Ralph Reed.

Mr. Bauer is a former Reagan White House policy adviser whose principal aim is to make his organization a player in Washington policy debates. He has battled GOP abortion-rights advocates, championed the Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas, pushed family tax cuts and, recently, led the charge of social conservatives against China's favorable trade status. "I've been policy oriented," Mr. Bauer summarizes.

Which isn't to say that he is without political assets. He sits today in a gleaming new headquarters building built by a few wealthy backers, including the DeVos family of Amway Corp. fame. His Family Research Council once was a part of Mr. Dobson's empire and still has access to his powerful radio megaphone. Mr. Bauer regularly tapes programs that are played on some 1,500 radio stations reached by Mr. Dobson's programs and writes a column for his newsletter. Daily, Mr. Bauer faxes out a policy memo to 4,000 supporters, who fax it on to tens of thousands more.

What Mr. Bauer doesn't have is Ralph Reed's political network or political style. Ultimately, Mr. Reed's power stems from the tens of thousands of Christian Coalition activists who plop down voter guides in church pews coast to coast just before every election. Mr. Bauer has 350,000 financial backers, but no such network. He has only begun moving in a similar direction, by just launching his own political action committee that has taken in \$600,000.

The most important difference, though, may be stylistic. Many Republicans see Mr. Bauer as more rigid and uncompromising than Mr. Reed. He's also more ready to openly criticize Republicans. In fact, he's willing to rock the boat in lots of ways. He acknowledges that his campaign to curb China's trade privileges places him at odds with the DeVos family, one of his big financial backers.

At heart, Mr. Bauer seems more frustrated that change in American politics and society isn't coming faster, and less willing to wait for incremental change. "At the end of the day," he says, "what Ralph [Reed] is saying by leaving, and what I'm saying by starting my PAC, is that what we've been doing in the last few years hasn't been satisfying enough."

Gays find model to emulate

See Christian Coalition as textbook on strategy

By Walden Siew
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Gay-rights advocates say they want to emulate the political savvy of their staunch opponent, the Christian Coalition, in a new push to protect homosexual students in local schools.

They'll accept the compliment, leaders of the Christian Coalition say, but they won't accept a message they believe undermines traditional values and has no place in public schools.

After the media hype over comic Ellen DeGeneres' recent coming-out on her ABC situation comedy, many conservative activists stress that tolerating homosexuality is one thing, but promoting it in schools or on TV is another.

"Everyone has the right to petition elected officials with their own views," Christian Coalition spokeswoman Heidi Stirrup said. "If gay and lesbian groups try to capitalize . . . on the recognition that homosexuality is a viable lifestyle, that it should be celebrated, we of course do not believe that."

Gay-rights organizers say they are only in the early stages of forming a political strategy to convince area school systems to promote tolerance of homosexuals. But they already know they want to learn from the increasing clout of their conservative counterparts in the Christian Coalition.

"They basically are good political organizers," said Deanna R. Duby, director of education policy for People for the American Way, a Washington-based liberal lobbying group.

"They have done it person by person, chapter by chapter. They have given us a wonderful model on how to do it, and that's why they've been so successful."

People for the American Way is among gay-rights advocacy organizations belonging to a new group, the D.C. Metro Area Safe Schools Coalition, which formed



Photo by Sharon Natoli/The Washington Times

Deanna Duby speaks on current issues in a Bethesda church.

in October and intends to press school systems to adopt explicit protections for homosexuals. Member organizations include Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and other gay-rights groups.

"The Safe Schools Coalition is intended for members to have their voices heard. We're still very much in the planning stages," said Craig Bowman, executive director of the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, a 13-year-old organization that offers support groups and telephone counseling to homosexual students.

The Safe Schools Coalition sees a useful role model in the Christian Coalition's growth since 1989 from a grass-roots conservative lobbying movement into a national political force with 1.9 million members.

"People for the American Way basically exists to oppose us, but I appreciate the flattery," Christian Coalition spokesman Larry Cirignano said.

Founded in 1980, People for the American Way counts a membership of 300,000.

"The thing that the Christian Coalition is doing is getting the message across . . . that it's very important to turn out to vote," Ms. Duby said. "We have to make our opinion known and urge elected officials to do the right thing."

On a recent Sunday, Ms. Duby brought that message to River Road Unitarian Church in Bethesda, leading 30 participants in a discussion titled "How Should Public Schools Deal with Lesbian and Gay Issues?"

In travels across the country, Ms. Duby argued, she found homosexual students face discrimination everywhere.

"It's not worse in any particular place. It's all over," she said,

noting recent efforts to establish special rights for homosexual students in Maryland's generally liberal Montgomery County.

Public schools shouldn't be a party to accepting or advocating homosexuality, says Col. Robert Maginnis, a senior policy adviser for the Family Research Council.

"I don't think the school is a place to sanction the homosexual lifestyle. We don't need to condone the types of behavior we see in the television series 'Ellen,'" he said.

In Maryland, the Frederick County Board of Education's Curriculum Committee decided May 22 that high schools will provide students with telephone numbers for two homosexual support groups next fall, enraging some residents.

Leaders of the Frederick County chapter of the Christian Coalition said they may ask schools to give students the phone numbers of groups that steer young people away from homosexuality.

In Virginia, Mychele B. Brickner, an at-large member of the Fairfax County School Board, said every child should be taught that he or she has inherent self-worth.

"As far as singling out groups to respect, I think we should focus on building character," said Mrs. Brickner, who has opposed liberal sex-education programs and special considerations for minorities, including "diversity training" workshops.

In Montgomery County, Board of Education member Blair G. Ewing said helping to organize support groups for specific interests exceeds the school system's responsibility.

"If we prohibit discrimination and make it stick, we have done as much as we can in that arena," Mr. Ewing said.