This paper will present research on a cohort of men who became the corporate backers of what came to be called the “New Right.” Born between 1870 and 1900, these men – William F. Buckley, Sr; J. Howard Pew, Joseph Newton Pew, Robert McCormick, Pierre, Lamott and Ireneé Du Pont, Sterling Morton, Jasper Crane, Edward Hutton, Robert E. Wood, Howard Heinz and other influential members of a network of wealthy conservatives – learned the language of anti-Communism and un-Americanism as a part of growing up as the heirs and successors of a corporate elite in the process of formation. As this paper will argue, it was more than merely coincidental that Pittsburgh, Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles provided a historical context for these men in circumstances that gave new intensity to a vocabulary of anti-labor and counter-subversive discourse already in circulation in the 1840s and 1850s when their fathers, great-uncles, and grandfathers had launched their family companies. Sterling Morton’s memory of being on a train being stoned by the Pullman strikers in 1894 is only one of the clues to the importance of the late 19th and early 20th century events – the Railroad strikes of 1877, Haymarket, Homestead, Pullman, the bombing of the Los Angeles Times building, and Mexican revolution -- in producing a group reacting against very real threats rather than just exhibiting a psychological tendency to adopt a paranoid style.

The Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette and the Chicago Tribune reveal a common language of reaction in circulation as do meetings of Pittsburgh’s Chamber of Commerce to which the senior Pew and Frick belonged in 1892 when J. Howard Pew was attending Shadyside Academy with Heinz. A schoolboy essay about anarchists written by a young Du Pont, courses in Political Economy at MIT, and long-enduring ties to the Republican Party inculcated a set of assumptions about the rights of property and the market system which formed the “business creed” of this generation of businessmen whose participation in the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Defense Society, the National Civic Federation, the Better America Federation, and other organizations reinforced their ideological commitments.

Their campaigns for the “open shop” thwarted workers’ efforts to organize. Soon after its founding, the NAM launched the more public face of this concerted anti-union action. Inspired by the Pinkertons and William J. Burns’ discovery of the culprits in the Los Angeles Times bombing, this cohort also engaged in covert surveillance against unions and cooperated with members of patriotic organizations in their anti-labor cause and anti-radical activities. In the 1930s, the shock of the New Deal’s pro-labor policies, and labor militancy mobilized these men into still more active resistance as evidenced in founding of the American Liberty League, the Crusaders, Spiritual Mobilization, Inc, America First and numerous other organizations. As contributions to this ideological counter-offensive, these men founded Human Events, Regnery Books, funded magazines like National Review and Christianity Today, sponsored the formation of Young Americans for Freedom, provided financial support for Carl McIntire’s fundamentalist anti-Communism and Billy Graham’s crusades, and supported Reagan and Goldwater as they passed on their ideological inheritance to a new generation. Crucial to their mobilization, as this paper will demonstrate, were their anti-union efforts linking their fathers’ activities in the 1880s and 1890s to their own long-lived careers as militant conservatives and godfathers of the so-called “New” Right in the 1960s and 1970s.