

PARTY TIME

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May 1990

Introduction

This memo outlines some thoughts on a political party strategy for progressives in the 1990s.

In shorthand, we propose a cross between the "party within the party" strategy favored by some Democratic Party activists and the "plague on both your houses" stance adopted by some critics of both major parties. For New Yorkers who know the state's history, we propose something between the New Democratic Coalition, the American Labor Party, and the Liberal Party. For convenience, let's call it the New Party (NP).¹

The current situation in New York spurs our thinking, as New York's electoral law and present political circumstance seem to offer conditions especially favorable to the NP. Our broader ambition, however, is to form NP or NP-like organizations in a number of states. That broader ambition frames our discussion.

Given the unsuccessful history of third party efforts in the U.S., skepticism about any such ambition is not only reasonable, but recommended. We share this skepticism, and our suggestions on how it might be overcome do not rely on a naive view of politics. We take full measure of the enormous obstacles to third party efforts in the U.S. electoral system, the sorry state of progressive organizations, the weakness of the American labor movement, and the pro-corporate bias of the media. Recognizing these things, we still argue for the attractiveness and feasibility of an NP strategy.

We make this argument in four steps. First ("Why Bother?"), we briefly review some reasons why progressives object to the present system of U.S. electoral politics. Second ("Inside, Outside, or Somewhere In-Between?"), we recount past discussions of third party alternatives, and argue for our own conception. Third ("Obstacles and Opportunities"), we respond to some objections to forming an NP, and get more specific on its programmatic agenda, structure, and range of activities. Fourth ("What is Needed?"), we briefly outline what is needed to implement the NP strategy. A brief Conclusion follows.

Before getting started, however, we enter a note on the intended audience for this memo.

We address our argument to "progressives." By this we mean people who are committed

¹Actually, this is more than a matter of convenience. We think it important that the party have a name that seems fresh, simple, and, above all, not weighted down with ideological baggage and labels. It should be allowed to define itself.

to democracy -- the idea that citizens should be free and equal in determining the actions of government and the terms of public policy. Among other things, a commitment to democracy implies a commitment to political liberty, and to making sure people have the material resources needed to exercise that liberty.

By "progressive" we also mean something other than "liberal," though we recognize overlapping commitments and shared values. Both liberals and progressives, for example, agree that affirmative government action (e.g., regulation, redistribution, education) is required to meet even minimal conditions of democracy. Both (sometimes joined by "honest conservatives") also favor "good government" and "honest government." They hold government to high standards of effective performance, and don't like public fraud and lies. Where progressives and liberals *disagree* is in their view of working people. In a nutshell, liberals don't believe working people have much capacity to govern their own affairs. Progressives have much more confidence, and that confidence fuels their democratic conviction. They believe in empowering working people, not just administering them in "kinder, gentler" ways. They believe that a society that encourages and harnesses the capacities of all people, including those of ordinary means, will be both morally superior to *and* better functioning than one that does not. This strengthens their commitment to democracy.

We make this distinction between liberals and progressives not to rehearse old political disputes, but to signal something about our conception of the NP. As outlined here, the NP will advance a political program with broad appeal -- including appeal to many liberals, as well as progressives, and even appeal to many who identify themselves as neither. But the NP will also be committed -- in its program, structure, and range of functions -- to the *empowerment of working people*. Among other things, this implies respect for and support of *unions* -- the principal organizations of working people. This commitment will be part of what distinguishes the NP from other parties, and for that distinction we make no apology.

1. Why Bother?

The first spur to political action is discontent with existing politics. Among progressives, current U.S. politics provides many reasons for discontent, and even outrage. We won't aim for a comprehensive catalogue of reasons here. We will offer a short list, however, organized around the elementary and widely shared progressive commitments to democratic process, equity, and efficient and honest government. These are minimal standards for judging a society and its government. In America today, even these standards are routinely violated.

Democratic Process: The ability to participate effectively and to enjoy political freedom is not equally shared in the U.S. In a democracy, attributes like wealth, skin color, ethnic heritage, and gender should all be irrelevant to meaningful participation in public life. In the U.S., they largely define politics.

The undemocratic and exclusionary character of the U.S. system is most clearly revealed in relation to class. Simply put, the American electoral process is almost fully dominated by business. On the one hand, playing the conventional electoral game costs huge amounts of

money. For example, a winning 1988 Senate campaign cost an average \$3.9 million. Non-rich people have almost no opportunity to run for office without first accommodating the financial interests that make meaningful participation possible. On the other hand, there is relatively little popular organization, especially among working people, that can compensate for the absence of hard currency. The equation familiar to all organizers -- that superior numbers can balance out insurmountable money -- is often more rhetorical than real. Politics is expensive, and effective political involvement by individuals with few material resources is hard. Those who need democracy most have it least.

The most damning evidence of the corruption of democratic process in America is the pattern of voting participation. As a percentage of the eligible electorate, American presidential turnout (excluding the Southern states, with their history of racial exclusion), is down to its lowest level in 200 years; "off-year" Congressional elections claim only a third of the electorate as participants; gubernatorial and mayoral races commonly claim even less. If rates of popular participation in electoral politics remain a basic measure of democracy, the U.S. ranks as one of the least vibrant democracies on earth.

In addition to being low, electoral participation in the U.S. is highly "class-skewed." Wealthy Americans vote at close to the same rate as wealthy voters in other countries, but poorer and less educated Americans opt out of the system in high numbers. They do so, by and large, because the major parties stopped competing for their votes decades ago. Those in this massive "party of non-voters" -- twice as big as either of the major parties -- correctly recognize that American politics offers them little. They are not irrational or lazy, just discouraged, and with good reason.²

Equity: In a democracy, ethically irrelevant attributes like wealth or race or gender shouldn't determine one's chances in life. Everyone should have a chance to develop their natural capacities; everyone should be helped to seize that chance; no one should be deliberately left behind. In America, however, this most essential promise of democracy is hollow. Income inequality is at record highs; there are bitter differences in economic status across race; gender inequality is pervasive.

Again, class divisions tell the story effortlessly. By almost any comparative measure, the U.S. lags well behind other rich capitalist democracies in what the state does for working people. It spends less, covers fewer, provides worse benefits, and finances its operations in a less progressive way. This assertion can be sustained in all major areas of social and economic policy -- health, education, environment, social insurance, income maintenance, wage regulation, other labor legislation, industrial planning, trade regulation, and, of course, taxes.

²While we don't explore the point here, it's worth emphasizing that neither the low turnout that now characterizes the U.S., nor the class-skew that it reflects, were nearly as significant in the past. In the middle to late 19th century, during the heyday of American party politics, voter participation ran between 70 and 80 percent of the eligible electorate, and the poor and working classes voted at roughly the same rates as the rich. Contrary to all other industrialized countries, then, the maturation of the American political system in the 20th century has been marked by declining participation.

Or consider basic material indicators of racial and gender equality. Since 1973, median black family income has actually *fallen* as a percentage of white family income, dropping from 58 to 56 percent; for Hispanic families, the ratio also dropped, from 69 to 63 percent. Among women, there has been a rise in the ratio of their earnings to those of men; since 1979 this has risen from 63 to 71 percent. Most of this rise, however, is accounted for by the drop in male wages since that time, not by a rise in women's wages. If men were still making what they did in 1979, the ratio would have increased only to 66 percent -- only slightly higher than its level of 35 years ago.

And while racial and gender inequalities persist or grow worse, overall income inequality in the U.S. is hitting record levels. Over 1977-88, the income of the poorest fifth of families fell 15 percent; for the top fifth it rose 17 percent; for the top one percent of families it rose 50 percent. The bottom 40 percent of American families now receive only 15 percent of family income, the smallest share on record. The wealthiest 20 percent now receive 44 percent, the biggest share on record. Reflecting this, we have a record number of millionaires, but more people living in poverty. In 1988, 32 million Americans fell below the poverty line (\$9,435 for a family of three), and two-fifths of them lived at less than *half* the poverty line. Among black Americans, the poverty rate was 32 percent; among Hispanics, 27 percent; among female-headed households, 38 percent; among all American children, a staggering 20 percent.

These sorts of failures in the equity of our system, in turn, reflect more general failures to "promote the general welfare." American living standards -- and not just hourly wages -- have been falling for years. Our society is marked by stagnating family incomes (even among two-earner families); widespread deterioration in environmental quality; a massive housing crisis; a gross coarsening of life in our major cities; the collapse of much physical infrastructure; sharp erosion of our international economic position; and brutal (and unnecessary) failures to meet any number of other basic needs -- in health, nutrition, child care, and education -- of general social concern. These issues bear most heavily on the poor and working class, but they affect virtually everyone.

That such huge problems are not addressed by public policy is sometimes blamed on conservative public opinion. This is a poor argument, for on a wide range of such public concerns conservative government policy (or better, absence of policy) is sharply at odds with national sentiment. The conventional wisdom of the Reagan years -- that the public moved substantially to the right, forcing a conservative realignment of public policy -- is increasingly exposed as myth. On most salient issues of public policy -- economic performance, basic equity, social spending, the environment and other public goods -- the public continues to move in a more progressive direction. This puts it well in advance of the politicians it sees having let the most serious national problems "get more serious without doing very much" (59%) and having the "wrong" (too militarily inclined) budget priorities (63%).

When the public opinion argument fails, apologists for the *status quo* commonly cite the need to preserve the workings of an efficient economy. We are told there is a great tradeoff between efficiency and equity -- that to have a productive economy, high levels of inequality

within that economy are necessary. But this argument too is barren, as comparative experience makes clear. Far from there being an "equity-efficiency" tradeoff, it appears that greater equality in income distribution and good economic performance go hand in hand.³ Inequalities in the U.S. are not part of the solution for a competitive and productive economy. As the experience of such successful competitors as West Germany, Japan, Sweden, and other countries make clear, they are part of the problem.

Efficient Government: What is true of economic performance is true as well of political performance. The basic demand that government *work*, that it enact and effectively enforce policies aimed at the general welfare, is frustrated in the U.S. by the undemocratic character of our political process. Again, comparative experience is telling. Countries whose national political process is more inclusive of the working population, and more equitable (as a result) in policy outcomes, typically find that they can deliver beneficial policies at less cost than in the U.S. And they are able to do so *because* they are more inclusive and equitable -- that is, more democratic.

Consider health care. As everyone knows, the U.S.: (a) is alone among developed capitalist democracies in not having national health insurance; (b) spends more on health care than anyone else; and (c) has some of the worst performance on basic health indicators.

Even ignoring the gross inequalities in this system -- the fact, for example, that 37 million Americans don't have any health insurance and another 20 million don't have nearly enough -- its sheer waste and poor overall performance in delivering decent health care is impressive. The culprits are the administrative overhead and unproductive marketing costs connected with multiple insurance providers, and the "catch-up" costs of treating those who, because of insurance problems, don't seek early treatment. It's a disaster on its own free-market terms, let alone from a progressive point of view. This disaster could be prevented, and the distributional issues solved, if the U.S. had national health insurance -- something that most of the population wants, but that ordinary Americans have never been able to get from their government.

Consider occupational safety and health. On all accounts (liberal, conservative, radical), OSHA doesn't work well. Few standards are set, and those that are are set low. Business opposition to tougher laws explains this. But even the standards that are set are not seriously enforced. The result is that that OSHA delivers very little benefit for considerable cost. Why? Primarily because in the U.S., as against almost all other countries with serious occupational health programs, workers are not represented in the enforcement process on the shop-floor. Such involvement makes it easier to target problems, propose solutions, and enforce national standards. In the U.S. case, enforcement relies on a tiny band of inspectors. The role of working people in program administration has never been accepted, and the program works less well as a result.

Or consider industrial and labor market policies. As everyone knows, private sector U.S.

³Here we limit the comparison to developed capitalist economies, and measure "efficiency" by recent productivity growth.

union density has fallen continuously since the early 1950s, with the result that we now have the lowest rate of private sector unionization in the advanced capitalist world (lower even than before the Wagner Act). This is a disaster for workers in need of union representation. In addition, however, it's a disaster for industrial policy, vocational training, technology diffusion, and the "soft productivity" gains that come from a workforce that gets respect on the job. Without unions, it is very difficult to plan and enforce industrial policy; it's next to impossible to have a functioning training system; it's difficult to speed the diffusion of new technologies faster than current market signals require; and, despite the best efforts and threats of "human relations" professionals, it's difficult to elicit genuine cooperation from workers. The reason in all these cases is that worker organizations are needed to coordinate labor's input, to enforce industry-wide standards on private firms, and to give workers themselves the protection and power needed to make an independent contribution.

We dwell on these (perhaps dry) examples of inefficiency not only because they unmask the phony "equity-efficiency tradeoff" or "better business climate" strategy that so enchants U.S. policy-makers and media elites, but because they also underscore the point about progressive politics entered at the outset. The point, central to the NP, is simple enough: *Working people and their organizations are not just deserving objects of sympathy and fair treatment, but necessary subjects of successful public policy.* If parents are the irreplaceable component of school reform, working people are the irreplaceable component of social and economic reform.

Truthfulness: A final reason (in case anyone needs one) for outrage with the current set-up is that it is morally insulting and corrupt. American government does not seem bound by even elementary standards of decency and truthfulness. Having promised that we would not adopt a naive view of politics, we don't mean to suggest that governments can be held to the same standards of ethics as real persons. Still, it seems worth noting that there is something truly debased about the present state of public life in the U.S., the sheer level of corruption in public office, and the lying by public officials. While it is naive to expect of government what one might expect of a friend (loyalty, kindness, generosity), it does not seem unreasonable -- indeed, it seems necessary to the achievement of democratic government -- to expect that government officials not intentionally mislead the public, abuse the public trust, loot the treasury, or engage in the basic malfeasance that are now routine, and routinely unpenalized. This is the stuff of cynicism. And it is the stuff of powerlessness, for that is the destination of cynicism.

2. Inside, Outside, or Somewhere In-Between?

These criticisms of American government and process are familiar enough. For progressives, they generate disgust with the present system, and a desire to transform it. But they fall short of specifically mandating a third party, even of the NP variety, as the instrument of reform -- and that's the subject at hand. Why take this approach over others? Our answer grows from an interpretation of recent, and not so recent, history.

2.1 Past Debates

The debate among American progressives about how to relate generally to electoral

politics, and specifically to the major parties (since the New Deal, the Democratic Party) is replayed each election cycle. This debate is framed by two background facts.

First, it has long been clear that the major parties offered only a "devil's bargain" of alliance, in which support is generally exchanged for frustration ("We elected him, and now he doesn't even listen to us ..."). Thoroughly dominated by business, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are committed to anything approaching a social democratic agenda -- progressive taxation and spending, increased investment in social welfare and non-military public goods, respect for civil liberties and the rights of other nations, and, throughout, racial pluralism and the empowerment of working people. Non-business-dominated groups sometimes get "dealt" into policy discussion, and sometimes receive some patronage. But the basic structures of power remain unchanged.

Consider the case of organized labor. Over the past 50 years, labor has been the most important national proponent of key aspects of that social democratic agenda,⁴ pursuing them in a *de facto* alliance with the Democrats. When all is said and done, however, labor has little to show for the effort. Labor has been unable to enact comprehensive social policies that meet the needs of workers and their families; to establish significant labor market, incomes, or industrial policies; to gain progressivity in the tax system; or, perhaps most strikingly, to improve the conditions of its own organization. Indeed, after spending millions of dollars and untold hours helping to elect Democratic candidates, labor finds itself barely tolerated in the highest reaches of the party, largely undefended by party leaders from attacks by business and the press, and facing a disaster in its ability to look to government for help in fighting local battles with capital. When the going gets tough, even Democratic "friends of labor" tend to run the other way.

It might be argued, of course, that things would be even worse were labor not involved with the Democratic Party. That is almost surely correct, *everything else being equal*. But everything else is not equal, and that is the heart of the matter. In pursuing its alliance with the Democrats, labor gave up alliances with forces outside elite Democratic circles -- alliances that arguably would have had greater effect in democratizing America. Reasonable people may reasonably disagree about the wisdom of labor's past political choices. But however one comes out on this question, what seems clear is that the cost of playing the "insider game" was high, and that labor's loyalty to the Democrats has not been repaid in turn. It also seems clear that rebuilding the labor movement *now* requires restitching the quilt of alliances labor once rejected.

⁴We say this in full knowledge of two things. First, that at AFL-CIO headquarters, and in most affiliate unions, foreign and military policy was bitterly Cold War for most of this period. There were always exceptions, however, and the exceptions have grown of late. Many unions and their members, for example, have campaigned against U.S. intervention in Central America. Second, the highly decentralized character of the American labor movement, combined with a hostile political climate and the need to deliver benefits to their base, has generally led unions to focus most of their energies on obtaining tangible membership benefits, rather than mounting broader political strategies. Especially in concert with the Cold War rhetoric and action, this narrow political agenda has commonly alienated labor from many of its natural allies -- civil rights, anti-war, feminist and environmental movements. Here again, however, recent events give pause for hope. On all sorts of fronts, labor is seeking broader political alliances.

But if the devil's bargain is an enervating failure, the second big background fact framing the debate is that the history of third party alternatives seems even more grim. Barriers to durable and successful third parties in the U.S. are extremely high. They are so high, indeed, that while more than a thousand third parties have been formed in the U.S. since the evolution of the modern party system in the 1860s, only a tiny handful have ever polled more than a tiny fraction of the vote, and none among those ever did so over a long period.

The reasons are many, but one basic feature of the U.S. system stands out as explanation: single-member districts with winner-take-all election rules (i.e., non-proportional representation). Within such a system, votes for a third party candidate are generally "wasted" votes. Unless the third-party candidate actually wins (as against merely doing well), there will be little or nothing to show for the electoral effort.

With these two facts as background, then, the debate among progressives takes shape. On one side are the "moderates,"⁵ who argue that an alliance with the Democrats remains our "best hope." What might be called unthinking moderates promote this without hesitation, and thus add little to progressive debate. Thinking moderates, however, urge this strategy with their eyes wide open. They know that the Democrats are business dominated. They recognize that previous alliances with them have not been particularly successful. But they urge a Democrats-based strategy (or a strategy based within the Democratic Party) nonetheless.

In its most sophisticated version, the thinking moderate strategy argues that third party efforts, given the existing barriers, are simply out of the question. Instead, the task remains one of extracting concessions from the Democrats in return for electoral support. Importantly, since this is an insider strategy and alternative electoral vehicles are by definition ruled out, the choice between support and non-support reduces to a choice between voting Democratic and not voting at all. Jesse Jackson's recent campaign for President is, on this reading, a spirited and thoughtful moderate strategy. Jackson sought certain rules changes in the party, and certain commitments from it on program, in return for his commitment to mobilize (predominantly black) voters. If this was the carrot, the stick was a threat of massive abstention by such voters.

On the other side are the "radicals," who urge a thorough break with the Democrats -- either through the formation of a third party running its own candidates for office, or through abandonment of mainstream electoral politics altogether. Radicals argue that the scarce resources of progressives should not be wasted on Democratic pipe dreams. They point to regular betrayals by candidates supported, even elected, by progressives. And they hold that the fundamental structural changes needed to democratize the political system are best realized by mobilizing outside the circles of conventional politics. This leads them, in general, to put more emphasis on non-electoral forms of political activity.

2.2 Our Conception

⁵We mean nothing by these labels, and only use them as a shorthand to stand for different arguments.

There is much to recommend each side in this debate, which is why the debate has gone on as long as it has. At the same time, however, we think the debate itself has reached its limits in producing new insight, and that the time has come to recast its terms and move beyond it.

To begin, we argue against both sides.

Against the moderates we would argue that we need a bigger stick. It is difficult to deliver on a threat of abstention, and even when a threat of abstention is enforced, it does not appear to be enough to extract concessions. The system, it should be recalled, practically *depends* on people not voting. The leaders of both business-dominated parties prefer a demobilized electoral universe to a mobilized one, and can certainly live with even fewer voters than we have now. Recent electoral history is instructive on this point. We have had massive declines in turnout, especially among working class voters. This might be seen as a sort of *de facto* enactment of the moderate threat strategy. But that decline certainly hasn't been associated with a left turn by the Democrats, but by the opposite.

Furthermore, the sheer difficulty of extracting concessions (as the Jackson case made clear) suggests that moderates may move too quickly from the *correct* assertion that progressives must be involved in some way with the Democrats to the *incorrect* conclusion that all electoral activity needs to be based in the Democratic party, and even that electoral activity should dominate other progressive efforts. While we are all for attempting to extract concessions from the Democrats, playing complicated abstention threat games around election time does not strike us as the most promising way to build a lasting base for progressive efforts. Effective progressive politics requires a capacity to mobilize people in electoral arenas not defined by the Democrats, and in non-electoral arenas. Building that capacity requires that attention be paid to non-Democratic and non-electoral struggles (issues campaigns, community organizing, etc.).

Against the radicals we would argue that a wholesale abandonment of conventional politics (in particular, dealings with members of the Democratic Party) is unnecessary and undesirable. Despite its intense business dominance, that party remains the unhappy home of virtually all progressive forces in the U.S. It also remains (outside the Presidency, of course) the dominant political party in this country. And, rightly or wrongly, for most Americans "politics" *is* defined in terms of electoral politics. Without some electoral strategy, progressives will be marginal.

Putting these points together, then, we'd say this. Against the radicals, we would argue that to reach the sort of people we wish to reach we need to be in *some* active relation to the Democratic Party. Barriers to third parties running their own candidates are real, and in conventional party politics, the Democrats really *are*, as the moderates would say, "the only game in town." Against the moderates, however, we'd argue that acceptance of these points doesn't require that in playing the electoral game one must only play, and always play, by Democratic rules. And we certainly don't think that non-electoral activity should be slighted.

Is there a way of embodying these views in a conception of a new political party? Yes, we think there is. Let's consider the electoral side of the equation first, and then the non-electoral

one.

Electoral Politics: NP Style

On the electoral front, we think the key lies in seeing just where the barriers of entry to third parties are. We've said that it's very difficult for third parties to sustain themselves as vehicles for independent candidates -- that is, candidates that are not candidates of one of the major parties. If the Democrats run Smith, and the Republicans run Jones, and the NP runs someone else, "someone else" is likely to lose. If that happens each election, or for all offices available in the election, NP members are likely to get discouraged, and the NP is not likely to last.

On the other hand, barriers to the formation and maintenance of third parties themselves, while considerable, are *almost infinitely lower than barriers to the success of independent candidates sponsored by those parties*. In other words, it's much easier to get and maintain party status -- and with it, a ballot line for that party -- than it is to win elections with your own candidates on that line.

In most states, to qualify for such "ballot status" requires an initial showing of support (a certain number of signatures from registered voters). Maintaining the status requires polling a certain percentage (usually very low) of the ballots cast in certain state races (e.g., for governor). If the party is willing to run at least some candidates from one of the other major parties on its line, moreover, *it's usually quite easy to pass this maintenance test*. If, for example, the maintenance requirement is that the third party poll one percent of the vote cast for any statewide office (a common state requirement), then third parties can easily maintain their status by simply endorsing a major party candidate for some such office. Those sympathetic to the third party can then vote for Smith or Jones, who get the benefit of that vote, but the vote also counts as a vote cast for the third party.

The Liberal Party in New York has done this for years. It is a very small party, but has maintained itself simply by endorsing the Democratic or Republican nominee for governor -- the state-wide office in New York that is key to maintaining ballot status. A certain number of voters, well above the threshold requirement, then vote for that candidate on the Liberal line, and the party is secure in its ballot status for another four years. In fact, of course, the Liberals usually (not always) endorse candidates from the other major parties for *all* offices. In addition to ensuring the ballot line, this means that people voting the Liberal Party line know that they are almost never "wasting" their votes on marginal candidates, but voting for some candidate also endorsed by one of the major parties.

At the same time, having an independent party line -- even one used in this way -- gives those who hold that line considerably more power than they would have had if they simply voted for Smith or Jones on one of the major party lines. Merely having ballot status qualifies a party, in many cases, for a range of in-kind, tax, and direct cash supports. These sorts of supports, available to Republicans and Democrats, are not to be scoffed at. They can contribute, however marginally, to building progressive organization, and thus to altering the general balance of

political forces. Leaving material resources to the side, however, the more immediate source of increased power is that the existence of such a line, ready-made, waiting for use, gives a third party a credible "threat of exit" from the major parties. This gives it considerable power in determining the nominees of the major parties. And in those cases where such pre-election brokering fails, where both of the major parties nominate candidates unacceptable to the third party, the threat can be realized by the party's endorsement of a third candidate.

Again, the Liberal experience in New York is instructive. For good or ill, no one will deny that the Liberals have had a hand in Democratic and Republican affairs vastly disproportionate to their numbers. And in some cases, the Liberals have used their independent line to change the outcome of elections. When John Lindsay sought the Republican nomination for New York City mayor and lost, Liberals ran Lindsay on their line and won. And when Jacob Javits lost the Republican Senatorial primary to Alfonse D'Amato, the Liberals ran Javits on their line anyway, and by thus "splitting the liberal vote" helped ensure the defeat of Democratic nominee Elizabeth Holtzman. The first example is an attractive one for progressives; the second one is not. What we cite them for is not their attractiveness, however, but as evidence of the power that an independent line gives.⁶

In addition to the important effects of such a strategy, consider its intrinsic expressive appeal. If cross-endorsement of more mainstream candidates ensures the maintenance of the third party, it also gives those who vote for those candidates on the third party line a chance to distinguish their support as *qualified*. Such a third party gives progressives something they have rarely had in American politics: the possibility of casting a *protest vote that is not wasted*.

What we conclude then, is this. When it comes to electoral strategy, the best bet for progressives is to be both "inside" and "outside" the Democratic Party. And structurally, this means achieving something like what the Liberals have in New York. Form a party that will have a line of its own, maintained by the cross-endorsement of progressive Democrats. Use that line, and that endorsement promise or non-endorsement threat, to pressure the Democrats toward more reasonable candidates (genuinely progressive Democrats have nothing to fear; they'll get the NP endorsement, and indeed be strengthened in their position as progressives). And when all else fails, and it looks like there's a chance of winning with your own person, or where a strong "message" needs to be sent to the Democrats about your seriousness, run an independent candidate.

⁶The Javits-Holtzman example also raises the issue of the NP's possible role as a "spoiler," sometimes cited to us as an objection to the idea. We don't see the force of this objection. If "spoiler" is synonymous with "irresponsible," then the objection only amounts to saying that progressives might use their increased power in irresponsible ways. Yes they might, but there is no reason to believe they will, and the conclusion to which this version of the spoiler objection drives, namely that the way to prevent irresponsibility in politics is to prevent progressives from having independent power, is ludicrous and unacceptable. If "spoiler" is used more technically, as meaning "a minority party with the ability to determine the balance of power between the two major parties," well, that is exactly the state of affairs that is sought. Again, the concern about irresponsible uses of such power can come in at this point, but here we'd just restate our response above.

Doing this would seem to satisfy, within the admittedly severe constraints of American electoral politics, one basic problem that progressives have faced: *how to give voice to our political aspirations in ways that matter in conventional electoral arenas*. It does so with some structure (it's not dependent on charismatic candidates), with a credible threat of exit that amounts to more than abstention, and it is attentive to the reality that people don't want to "waste" their votes. Given the basic rules of the game in American politics, we don't see how progressives can do much better than this. We do think that this will be a huge improvement over our present position.⁷ And we don't see how doing this precludes doing something more ambitious -- running more and more of our own candidates, as our base develops -- in the future. In brief, then, it seems to us a sensible answer to the "electoral question" -- "How does what you're doing relate to electoral politics?" -- that has for so long baffled progressive forces.

Non-Electoral Politics: NP Style

In the debate we rehearsed above between "moderates" and "radicals," the notion of a political "party" is usually seen narrowly, and specifically in electoral terms.⁸ This is too narrow a conception. To be sure, one defining characteristic of political parties is that they organize electoral competition. Parties field candidates for office, and compete to get their candidates elected. But this *electoral* function is not the only function that parties can or should perform. Parties can and should also perform an important role as *educational* institutions, and as arenas of more general political debate, activity, and *mobilization*. A distinguishing feature of the NP is that it would do exactly these things.

While neglected by the major parties in the U.S., this educational/mobilizing function is crucial. It is because no individual citizen, acting alone, can hope to be fully informed about electoral or other public policy choices, and certainly cannot hope to significantly influence the course of public debate. Organization is needed -- to pool the resources of individuals, share information among like-minded citizens, and generally provide forums in which such individuals can see one another, talk to one another, struggle together, and thus develop the knowledge, skills, solidarity, and self-confidence needed to be potent collective actors.

At past moments in the U.S. (and in other countries now), parties have performed these sorts of educational/mobilizing functions. Consider the study circles, newspapers, protests, rallies, and cultural and recreational efforts (dances, parties, picnics, public lectures, concerts, art shows, sports clubs) that characterized the rich political life of the Populists. Or consider the non-electoral efforts of any of the succession of socialist parties that have appeared on the U.S.

⁷Some have wondered how the sort of brokering and signaling on electoral matters in which the NP would engage is distinguishable from what NARAL, or the League of Conservation Voters, or COPE already does. Briefly, the NP would distinguish itself by the broadness of its political agenda -- the fact that it really does seek to mount a general political program, and not only a program of concern to some particular group -- and the fact that it has a credible threat of running its own candidates.

⁸Tony Mazzocchi's pioneering work popularizing a non-electoral labor party is an important exception here, to which we are indebted. See fn. 9, below.

scene. Education, mobilization, and even attempts to forge a distinct political culture and identity were at least equal partners with their electoral agendas.

We depart from the conventional debate among progressives in taking these non-electoral functions seriously, and in linking them to the limited electoral strategy just outlined.⁹ Specifically, and in addition to such electoral work, the NP should *invest heavily in a range of education/mobilization activities directed to building a base outside electoral arenas*. It would do so because there are limits to any plausible strategy of electoral threats; because the educational and mobilizing functions are important in their own right; and because the period in between elections is a long one, and if the NP is to be a credible arena of progressive politics, it must be active during that period. The NP should not serve only as a vehicle for getting people to the polls, but for building an educated and politically active citizenry. The goal is to alter the political landscape, not just occupy it.

2.3 Would An NP Be Desirable, As Against Other Alternatives?

If doing the NP was costless -- if it took nothing from other activities -- this question would answer itself. Of *course* it would be desirable to have an organization of the sort described. It would widen the space of present debate, reorder relations with Democratic elites, help coordinate what are now scattered progressive efforts, and provide a base for future politics. All this, we might add, while being exciting and fun for NP activists and members. With enough visibility, the NP could over time become a centering hub for diverse progressive forces. With modest efforts, it could become an invaluable source of information to activists. And simply to declare the project would announce solidarity among those groups -- labor unions, women's organizations, community groups, environmental alliances, civil rights and peace activists, among others -- whom we would expect to join at the founding of the effort.

All this, obviously, would be a good thing.

The harder question is whether the NP represents a good commitment of resources, *as against other possible commitments*. This question certainly doesn't answer itself. Answering it

⁹Recently, Tony Mazzocchi, Mike Merrill, and Les Leopold have argued for the need for a labor party doing the first of these things, while explicitly avoiding (at least for the next several years) *any* electoral activity. See Mazzocchi, "It's Time for a Labor Party" (available from The Labor Institute, 853 Broadway, NY, NY 10003). We are indebted to this conception of a non-electoral party, and greatly admire efforts to build it. In non-electoral activities, indeed, the NP and this proposed party would be natural allies. Obviously, however, we disagree on the wisdom of doing electoral work. More precisely, we believe that: (a) it's possible to do electoral work without that work absorbing all energies from non-electoral activity; and (b) progressives need some credible electoral strategy, however minimal (enough, in any case, to answer the question "How does your work fit into electoral politics?" with something other than a simple negative). A third difference (c) has to do with when and how NP coalitions with non-labor-based groups (e.g., women's groups, environmentalists) should be formed. Mazzocchi *et al* believe that any such alliance at this point would be premature, and destructive to rank and file labor involvement. We do not. We see these three differences as matters of political judgment, however, not principle. They are things on which reasonable people can reasonably disagree, and can only be settled by actual experience.

requires attention to particular situations -- at least, the political situation in different states -- and the views of activists in those situations. We're not going to pretend to provide such an answer here.

What we can do, however, is enter some background remarks on present political circumstance, and on how the question should be asked.

On present circumstance, four things seem worth noting. Each underscores the possible contribution of the NP:

(a) Progressives right now are less than the sum of their parts. There is very wide support for progressive policy initiatives in the general public, and an almost bewildering number of progressive groups of one stripe or another out there doing things. But this hasn't added up to progressive policy. For too long the American progressive movement has rested content with episodic coalition politics, in which people with convergent agendas join briefly with like-minded souls, then break apart, then form again, then break apart, and so on. It's a tired strategy. What progressives lack is an arena for their efforts that has some structure, but is also tolerant enough to represent a wide range of interests and talents. Only with the construction of such an arena can we hope to stop reinventing the wheel, or spinning our wheels in duplicated effort. Only then can we hope to combine the diverse elements of progressive forces in something more lasting than a rally.

(b) Progressives are not so divided. There are differences within the progressive camp, of course, and internal squabbling remains a favorite pastime. Our impression, however, is that the last 15 years or so have seen a winnowing of more extreme positions, and greater recognition of the need to work together. The sort of left social democratic program we're talking about enjoys *extremely* broad support among progressives (as well as among the general population). Again, this suggests that the time might have arrived to declare our implicit agreements more openly, and give them some organizational structure.

(c) Lots of people with progressive convictions are not organized. This, of course, is always the case, but it seems especially so now. We think there are literally millions of Americans who do not belong to a union or other progressive activist group who in fact have the convictions expressed by the NP. (This seems especially so among middle class [some lower, some upper] families headed by people aged 35-45. These people came to adulthood in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and seem not to have lost progressive political convictions acquired during that period. Given the pull of families and work, their political inactivity should *not*, we think, be taken as a sign of indifference, but simply severely strained time budgets.) It would help progressive politics in the U.S. to identify these people, and to give them some semblance of organizational unity. Having a party structure that doesn't involve an ostentatious wasting of votes, and a range of educational and other mobilizing activities that they can plug into, might be a big step in that direction. The NP is intended to be open to those who can only sustain low "affiliation costs" (that is, people who can't afford the time to do a lot, but who want to be identified with the effort, and who will do something). Membership in the NP will be a low-cost, low-hassle affair. Groups can join. Individuals can join. They would get a badge, bumper sticker,

button, newsletter, whatever else we could afford as a sign of membership, and would be informed of NP activities, and candidate choices, as a bare-bones service. Even this would be an advance over the present level of disorganization, and would not be very costly for us or for them.

(d) We think progressives in America really do need an answer to the electoral question (again: "How does what you're doing relate to electoral politics?") that is both consistent with our convictions *and* not an endless waste of time. Otherwise, we will cut ourselves off from people who only grant credibility to an effort if it has that relation, or who only have the time for electoral activity. This, we have learned from painful experience, is a very large group of people. However unfortunate it may be, in America "politics" is heavily identified with electoral politics. And each election cycle this elephant of concern -- how progressives will relate to the elections - - comes back into the room. The NP would get the elephant out of the room. It would give a clear answer to the electoral question, and free us up to do other things as well.

Now, what about tradeoffs between NP work and other sorts of progressive work?

We are not so troubled about this, for three reasons. First, the NP will engage in both electoral work and non-electoral work. If people don't want to do electoral work, they can do other things, and still relate to and benefit from the NP. Second, the NP need not be "zero sum" for progressive forces; instead of draining energies from other activity, doing it can enhance those other activities, for all the reasons just noted. Third, as also just suggested, the NP will reach people who are not and will not be reached by more conventional sorts of progressive organizations.

But of course, others may disagree. How one comes out on these calculations depends on political judgment, exercised in particular circumstances. We think, however, that this is enough to shift the burden of discussion to opponents of the NP. Instead of asking how the NP would hurt other progressive efforts, we should be asking why anyone would believe it wouldn't help them.

3. Obstacles and Opportunities

So far, we've argued that the present state of affairs in American politics is unacceptable, that an NP-styled organization might offer a way out of the trick bag of progressive-mainstream relations, and that the NP would be a good thing in its own right. Here we ask about the major premise of all this, namely whether an NP is really possible at all.

What should be said at the outset is that we don't know. But in this we are not alone, since nobody knows. For us, the question is not "Are we guaranteed of success?" but rather "Are there good reasons to think that this could be done?" And our answer to that question is a qualified "Yes."

3.1 Obvious Objections, and Obvious Answers

Let's get the obvious objections out of the way at the outset. We freely acknowledge that the state of progressive organizations leaves much to be desired. They have thin ranks, scanty budgets, and a knack for finding ways to disagree with one another. And everywhere, it seems, ruling elites are touting "market based" solutions to social problems, and rolling back worker organizations and parties in the process. In this context, the NP might seem utopian, or worse.

But that, we think, would be a premature conclusion. While present circumstances are bad, they are bad in ways that could be addressed by the NP. To say that the left is divided is to underscore the need for a unifying organization. To say that capital is on the offensive is to underscore the need for an organization dedicated to empowering working people, and to working out and publicizing the details of a program of action for them. To say things are so bad that nothing can be done is to give up before the fight, and this we are not prepared to do.

Nor does giving up seem necessary. As we look at things, there are lots of indicators suggesting the realism of the NP strategy. There's an unorganized demand for such a party out there -- evidence for which can be found in both public opinion and progressive activity.

Consider public opinion. The point has been made before, but the full reality of it has not yet sunk in among progressives: the American public is *much more progressive* than American public policy.

Vast majorities of the public recognize that economic threats, not military ones, are the keys to their country's future. Vast majorities favor increased public investment on a range of non-military public goods -- from clean air and water to child care and yes, even programs for the very poor -- thereby aiming to increase economic performance and enhance the quality of life. And vast majorities are willing to pay the taxes needed to fund such initiatives, if they have some reasonable assurance that the money will be extracted in a fair way, and actually spent on the programs to which it is dedicated.

Thus, for example, a slim majority of Americans (51 percent) favor the government "using its powers to promote the well-being of all segments of the people" (this is up from 30 percent in the early 1980s). Super-majorities favor increased activism in such areas as: environmental protection (92%); helping the homeless (89%); assuring affordable housing for all (86%); improving education (87%); promoting a "national economic plan that helps direct private sector investment to areas important to America's position in the world" (79%); and, counter to recent legal trends, ending discrimination against minorities (73%). Contrary to a new myth, the public says its willing to pay more taxes for all the above programs. Reasonably enough, however, it would also favor increasing taxes on the very rich (80%), and finds "rich people and corporations not carrying their share of the tax burden" a "very serious" problem (72%).

These are natural building blocs for a progressive political program of a populist stripe. When recently asked about one such program -- which would spend \$50 billion a year on deficit reduction, and another \$200 billion on domestic investment in education, retraining, and infrastructure, paying for this with a \$125 billion reduction in military spending, and another

\$125 billion in increased taxes on corporations and those making more than \$80,000 a year -- a whopping 81 percent of the public said they would "approve" of it, with 37 percent saying they would "strongly approve."¹⁰

Progressives should have the courage of their convictions about ordinary people. Working Americans are not mean or ungenerous. They *are* deeply worried about their families, the education their kids are getting, the lousy quality of their jobs, and -- more elusively but no less important -- the lack of meaning in their lives. They *are* repeatedly bamboozled and misled by conventional politicians, assaulted by endless symbols of a materialist culture that they recognize as spiritually bankrupt, and, understandably, quite cynical about the promises of politicians. But there simply can be no doubt -- and this is a bedrock belief -- that they are open to anyone who seems to be speaking, truthfully, about family, community, and national concerns.

Several broad movements, all likely to become more pronounced in the years ahead, also suggest that the democratic reconstruction of American society that the NP will promote will increasingly come to be seen as necessary.

A traditional goal of progressives, for example, has been to establish democratic control of the economy. Certainly one interpretation of how that should be done -- through centralized planning and bureaucratic state administration -- is properly discredited. At the same time, however, the need for fuller regulation of private economic behavior is increasingly recognized. Increasing international competition, and the example of other countries that compete more effectively, has underscored the social consequences and appropriate context of private business decisions. Increased female labor force participation, and the resulting exposure of the enormous costs of "social reproduction" long concealed within the household, has made clear the need to better integrate family and work life. And environmental catastrophe, local and global, has underscored the perversity of how we measure national "product" and standards of living, and made clear the need to curb business practices that are destroying the earth. Concerns about economic welfare, work and family tensions, and the environment are among the most salient concerns of American citizens. Each argues for an increased role for society, and not just business, in decision-making about the production system.

In addition, finally, the massive reordering of the international system reflected in the end of the Cold War opens a space for political experimentation that is unique in generations. Already showing up in the polls, and promising great gains to progressives in the years ahead, is the peace dividend. By this we mean more than relief from fiscal pressures on domestic spending, and public support for redirecting money from the Pentagon to civilian needs. Both are surely important, even historic,¹¹ and making sure that military savings are deployed to meet

¹⁰These figures are drawn from a medley of polls, by Harris, Gallup, the Analysis Group, and others. The final striking result is reported in the Analysis Group survey for the World Policy Institute, "Defining American Priorities" (18-23 May 1989).

¹¹As the *Harris Poll* reported last fall (8 October 1989):

human needs is perhaps the most immediate task facing progressive forces in the country. But the enduring "dividend" is more subtle: relief from the Cold War fears and rhetoric that have dominated American politics for generations, always to the detriment of progressive forces. Now the Cold War is over, declared as ended by both sides. A once-in-a-generation opportunity awaits, waiting to be seized. It is simply impossible to speak in public anymore, to visit a high school or college campus, to talk to workers and their families, and not be struck by the change that has occurred. It is now possible, as it has not been in years, to get beyond labels, and down to facts.

Of course, unorganized opinion is politically powerless, or next to it. Between progressive sentiments and progressive action looms the problem of organization, and the state of progressive organization is not impressive. Even here, however, there are grounds for hope, and specifically grounds for hope that an NP-like effort could cut across traditional divisions and build something interesting.

Consider organized labor. Even as its national stature continues to dwindle, the last several years have seen a range of efforts to rethink labor's "go it alone" strategy of self help. The noteworthy efforts of recent months -- the 1199 contract campaign, the NYNEX struggle, the victory at BASF, the Pittston strike -- demonstrate diverse organizing tactics, with diverse constituencies, but a common thread of *broad alliances* and *explicit political mobilization* to advance worker aims.

And, on the non-labor front, consider the broad-based citizen lobbying and electoral groups now operating in 30 states; the maturing alliances among progressives around regional industrial planning in Michigan, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania; the nascent coalitions of farmers, unions, and consumers to fight destructive biotechnologies in the Midwest; the innumerable voter initiatives and citizen referenda, like the Nader-led insurance reform in California and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth's work against coal companies in that state; the sophisticated militancy of housing groups on the savings & loan bailout; the vital and anti-corporate toxics movement in thousands of local communities; the reproductive rights movement; the networks of citizens, often church based, that have successfully rejected the most aggressive fantasies of the American right in Central America.

All this activity is, again, less than the sum of its parts. But this fact too is widely recognized, which provides a basis for beginning to change it. What already marks the best of these efforts is explicit recognition that single issue politics is not tolerable (even when it seems necessary). Community and issue activists across the country are clear that connections among issues must be found, and relations among progressives must be cemented, in the service of

No more than 10 percent of the American people now would favor spending more money on defense, while four times that number, 40 percent, would support cutting the level. This is the lowest mandate for increased spending on defense since the last days of the Vietnam War in 1971, and the second highest number of people in modern times who want to decrease military spending.

articulating a broader social agenda.

If we are right, the NP can perform an invaluable service in focusing these "thousand points of light" that now make up the American progressive-populist community. And in so doing it can draw on reserves of feeling among those who are not now activists, and those who would never dream of defining themselves as activists, but who are sympathetic, and more, to a new progressive agenda.

3.3 The Hard Work: Getting Specific

Let's say something about the program, structure, and activities of the NP.

Program: We see the NP as an explicitly social democratic organization, with an ideology roughly like that of Northern European (e.g., Swedish) labor movements. That is, it would take its task as one of working within the constraints of capitalism, even as it was critical of the fundamentally undemocratic character of capitalism.

It is ridiculous to talk about fundamental change in this country coming from organizations that are not based in the working class, but we also understand that class broadly -- certainly, white-collar and "pink-collar" as well as blue-collar workers. With this base, the NP would seek explicit alliance with non-class-based organizations of various stripes and sizes -- women's organizations, environmental groups, and the like -- that were willing to endorse its progressive agenda.

The NP's agenda would be to increase democratic control of the terms of social life, to improve the material circumstances of working people and the least well off, to widen the range of public debate about ways of achieving these goals, to empower working people, to help people achieve fulfilling work, family and community lives, to achieve justice in race and gender relations, and to save the planet.

From these abstract commitments would come a series of specific programmatic commitments -- on taxes, social and military policy, the design and administration of regulatory programs -- which would have a "red/green"¹² coloration. That is, they would combine a traditional social democratic emphasis on worker empowerment, economic equity, and democratic control of capital with explicit notice of environmental, peace, feminist, and, most importantly in the U.S., racial concerns. Importantly, the NP would take the economy seriously. It would have a "productivist" orientation, albeit one qualified by respect for the earth. And it would take administrative tasks seriously, not just leaving them to distant bureaucracies. Truth, and power, are in the details.

¹²The term is common in Europe, where social democratic parties, rooted in traditional working class organizations, increasingly find themselves in alliance with "green" parties rooted in consumer, feminist, environmental, and peace groups.

The NP would be a place to try out ideas now starved for oxygen in elite Democratic circles. It would set itself the task of constructing a new public philosophy -- practical as well as principled -- to advance democratic aims in an internationalized economy.¹³

Structure: We imagine the NP to be a *membership organization*, with membership open to both groups and individuals. Some dues structure would need to be established, with the usual efforts to supplement dues income with other sorts of revenue.

We imagine the NP being organized on a *state* basis, with various chapters, and some proportional rules on voting applied to the influence of different chapters (the bigger the chapter, the greater the influence). A state-by-state organizing plan is chosen on grounds of opportunism and realism. States are more important than ever before -- there is more power, and more opportunity for innovative use of that power, at the state and local level than at any time since the Second World War. And the state and local level offer relatively better odds for progressives than does the federal government.

In each state, the NP would have a minimal staff, divided roughly equally between field organizers (who would travel around the state, publicizing NP activities and helping to organize new chapters) and an office staff (charged with "development," bookkeeping, and the more impersonal forms of membership service). This staff, and its executive director, would be accountable to a board of directors, composed in roughly equal measure of representatives of select chapters (elected on a state-wide basis), and "at large" members drawn from the leadership of prominent group sponsors (e.g., leaders of unions affiliated with the effort).

Activity: Again, the NP would engage in both electoral and educational/mobilizing activity.

Elections: The NP would seek a stable "line" on state and local ballots, and urge its membership to vote that line in general elections. Three basic scenarios exist: first, the NP endorses acceptable candidates of the major parties (again, almost always the Democrats). Second, the NP line is awarded to its own candidates who are not cross-endorsed by the Democrats. This is a tricky business, and must be carefully done. But the value in well-chosen circumstances can be enormous, as is well known. Third, the NP neither endorses another party's candidate nor runs its own. This is an option we should be prepared to exercise. The line should mean something, and it would be important to guard against its cheapening by the endorsement of yellow-dog Democrats.

Each election cycle, the NP would publicize its endorsements among its membership and the general public, making more than the usual effort to justify that endorsement by reference to its program and overall goals. Drawing on its other activities, the NP would also provide assistance to progressive candidates, chiefly in the form of technical assistance, research, and the

¹³For more on the NP's principles and program, see Daniel Cantor and Joel Rogers, "New Party Principles" (included in this packet).

like, and not in the form of major donations of money.

In its electoral work, as argued above, the NP would in part function like a progressive (and honest) version of New York's Liberal Party. While it would sometimes run its own candidates, it would more generally "piggyback" its electoral efforts on the races of candidates from other parties. But here an immediate problem looms. Under current law, it appears that a piggyback strategy -- or, to dignify it, a strategy featuring multi-party endorsement (MPE) of single candidates -- can be pursued easily in New York, and (with some difficulties) in a few other states. Most states, however, appear to prohibit MPE.

What to do about this? Two things, we think.

First, recognize that it's not a total disaster. As emphasized throughout, we wish the NP model to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate variations across different states. This is obviously true for the non-electoral activities of the NP. But it is also true for the NP electoral activities. We can imagine situations in which, even if state law permitted MPE, local NP affiliates and members would not wish to make a major electoral effort, preferring instead to concentrate on education and issue campaigns. And even where MPE bars exist, and NP activists do wish to mount an electoral effort, there's still some room for maneuver.

Second, challenge MPE restrictions. These seem highly vulnerable to challenge,¹⁴ and, properly handled the challenges themselves can be mobilizing -- occasions to publicize outrageously restrictive state regulations, the bankruptcy of current political debate, the new message of the NP, and so on. In addition, such legal challenges need not be particularly slow, or expensive. Using the 1871 Civil Rights Act (42 USC Sec. 1983), we can go into Federal court immediately (no exhaustion of state remedies is required),¹⁵ and can get attorney's fees if we win.¹⁶ There should be no problem finding excellent civil rights lawyers to mount the litigation on a contingency basis, costing us little or nothing.

Education and Mobilization: The NP's education/mobilization efforts would by no means be an afterthought to the electoral work. In fact, the non-electoral work is what prevents this from being simply a "better" version of the Liberal Party. In no particular order, we believe it central to this whole project for the NP, its capacities permitting, to engage in such activities as:

(a) Publicize its own program, and the thinking that went into it, among members and

¹⁴See Daniel Cantor and Joel Rogers, "SUE!" (included in this packet).

¹⁵This assumes existing doctrine on non-exhaustion continues to apply. See *Monroe v. Pate* 365 US 167 (1961); *Patsy v. Board of Regents*, 457 US 496 (1982). While there are many weird things about the Rehnquist Court, we don't see this doctrine being overturned anytime soon.

¹⁶We might point out to our prospective lawyers that their own costs should be low. The issues are clearly questions of law, not the application of settled law to contested questions of fact. As a consequence, the major cost of most litigation -- the costs of pretrial "discovery" -- will be limited.

other citizens. Doing this requires considerable imagination, and we do not pretend to have *the* answer. Among possible answers, however, are the speakers bureaus, radio shows, video libraries, newsletters, slide shows, and other standard publicizing techniques mentioned earlier.

A premium would be placed on getting these to working people, and working people, obviously, have little time to spend sitting around listening to speeches. Thus we imagine a menu of possible ways that people with tight time budgets could avail themselves of NP materials, and imagine affirmative efforts to take the NP show on the road, and into community centers, work-sites, churches, etc. In addition, we favor extensive use of high-visibility, low-cost, signals of NP affiliation -- literally, bumper stickers, buttons, T-shirts, and the like.

(b) Train activists in the principles and program of the NP, teaching them how to spread the word. The idea here is simply to get a multiplier on staff energies, and to actively integrate informal staff into the recruitment and publicizing process. Workshops that use the "popular education" model are increasingly common in union and community training circles, and could be adapted to NP use. Done properly, this method battles cynicism and ignorance as much in its teaching style as in its content. It's education from the bottom-up, and fits with a grassroots political strategy.

(c) Mount a series of issues campaigns, alone or in conjunction with other groups, and provide support to particular struggles. What we mean here is obvious enough. There are a host of issues -- national health care, declaring the peace dividend, getting affordable housing for working families -- that might be appropriate targets for the NP. And there are always a range of more particular struggles -- a union fight for recognition in some industry or firm, a community effort to block a regressive development strategy, an environmental disaster waiting to happen, or be prevented -- that command attention. It's not appropriate in this memo to say precisely which of these is most worthy -- not least because they all are. What precise issues and fights are mobilized around is a matter of judgment in particular circumstances, made by NP activists.

(d) Provide a "space" for activist reflection and strategizing. What we have in mind here is a scaled-down version of the Highlander Center, which performed such a critical role in the civil rights movement. The NP should run regular workshops, seminars, retreats, summer camps, and the like. The value of face-to-face gatherings between people of diverse backgrounds is often lost in the non-participatory television age. It needs to be recaptured.

(e) Do research for building a progressive program. Alone or in conjunction with other groups, the NP should seek to develop real capacities for research on pressing questions for its members. In addition to the range of services and educational activities directed specifically to membership, it should continually build its own knowledge base, and the clarity of its programmatic vision, through semi-scholarly research and writing. It would be natural to use the results of this in further publicity of NP activities -- through dissemination to membership, testimony before public bodies, op-ed pieces in newspapers, and the like.

(f) Network information, services, and pro bono experts. The NP should see itself less as an edifice, standing alone and unto itself, than as a catalyst and hub for activity. One obvious but

nonetheless useful function it can perform is simply to serve as a bulletin board for different sorts of information and expertise of use to the membership.

To take only the most apparent example: the universities of this country are increasingly dominated by business. Labor and other progressive forces have little real presence in the direction of research, and gain little direct benefit from the research that is done. Given the institutional pressures of academic life, it is unlikely that universities can be converted, wholesale, into organizations actually serving the people who pay the taxes that support them. It does however seem quite possible to make much fuller use of academic expertise than is now done, if the "transactions costs" -- time and energy -- in negotiating agreements between activists and academics were reduced. The NP could do that. It could relatively quickly establish a network of academics who would be willing to contribute analytic skills and research time to political projects. With some effort, the same can be done for non-university based professionals -- including engineers, health experts, even lawyers and accountants.

(g) *Mount a range of cultural and recreational activities.* This is limited only by our imaginations. We can imagine art shows, softball leagues, you name it. Important, however, is that something be done here. The NP should be seen not only as a political organization in a narrow sense, but as an organization that expresses, in some measure, the full range and complexity of its members' lives and needs.

(h) *Provide basic services to members.* Without bogging itself down in minutiae, or performing functions that are already performed by other groups, the NP should also, of course, serve its members and affiliates. If a union local is in the middle of a fight, it should be able to call on the NP for help. Providing educational material of immediate benefit to members (e.g., on the availability of different government benefits) should not be "beneath" the party, and the same goes for helping members navigate local welfare and education bureaucracies, grant agencies, and the like. There are limits to how much of this the NP can do. The point is that it should see such basic "service to the people" as part of its mission.

We return then to the earlier question: whether the constraints on *these* specific sorts of activities, with *this* sort of structure, and *these* general goals, are too great.

On the electoral side, apart from the various restrictions of state electoral law noted above, the chief barrier is an obvious one. Progressive leaders with the standing to make this happen are not exactly free agents. They are typically under intense (and conflicting) pressures from members, from powerful politicians, from competing organizations. There is a hump of credibility to this project that has to be gotten over. This will require leadership, and the willingness to stick out a storm of criticism. In addition, of course, depending on the dynamics of particular settings, playing the "inside/outside" game that we recommend will encounter difficult matters of judgment. For example, in some states (*certainly not all*) one must be a registered member of a party to participate in its primary.¹⁷ NP members wishing to participate in the

¹⁷Under *Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut*, 470 U.S. 208 (1986), such a restriction is illegal if imposed by the state in opposition to the party holding the primary. See discussion in Cantor and Rogers, "Sue!"

primary of another party, then, can be torn between their interest in participating in that primary and their interest in preserving the NP itself from takeover by sectarians or others.¹⁸ Again, the fact that the Liberal Party in New York has survived such difficulties for so long suggests that they are not insuperable, but again, the matter will involve close calls of judgment in particular cases, under different sorts of electoral rules. Short of getting down to particular cases, we don't have much to say.

On the non-electoral side, the barriers are familiar but negotiable. Beginning with the familiar: Most people lead highly fractured lives. There is no single working class, and few stable centers of working class life that bring people together. Furthermore, people have severely constrained time-budgets and cross-cutting interests. After getting up, going to work, getting the kids to bed, and having a moment for each other, or themselves, most parents simply do not have any time, or inclination, to go out to a public meeting. Single parents have even less.

Negotiating this barrier requires devising attractive and exciting ways of communicating with people that do not require such time commitments (e.g., videos that they can take home and plug in, used to great effect by the Pat Robertson forces in the 1988 election), and ways that integrate political activity with other activity. Most people (particularly, parents) would be hard pressed to take a weekend off to go to a political meeting, for example. But they might welcome taking a weekend off to go somewhere with the kids, at modest expense, where day-care would be taken care of, recreation time would be built into the schedule, and where they, along the way, could catch a lecture or two, participate in some workshops, and talk about the kind of society they'd like to live in. And while many workers are reluctant to come to a union meeting, they might be willing, and interested, to watch a 20-minute video at their lunch hour. With some rare exceptions, progressives have been singularly unimaginative in designing such situations, but there is nothing in principle that bars their design, and the NP should take it upon itself to do it. Of course, workshops and schools and lectures are insufficient for the mass audience the NP will ultimately want to reach. But even here there are interesting precedents available, as with ACORN's four radio and one television station that unapologetically broadcast, as one disc jockey says, "in the interests of low and moderate income people."

Summary: A Different World?

To summarize this discussion, it is helpful to imagine a world in which the NP successfully existed, with a *base* of 10-20 percent or so of the total vote. In this world, Democrats would compete for NP endorsement, and such endorsement would actually mean something. The "threat of exit" would occasionally be acted upon (bringing denunciations and charges of irresponsibility), keeping the brokering lively. In general, though, the NP would

¹⁸This problem is probably particularly important during the early stages of the NP, when the party is just struggling for credibility. At that point, low membership means that the party must be particularly careful to guard against takeover, and party members may be particularly interested in participating in other party primaries. As the NP grows, both concerns would become less pressing.

severely limit its own candidates and content itself with bootstrapping (unfairly, but wisely) on the popularity of existing candidates. Like the Liberal Party, the NP would become part of the political landscape. Unlike the Liberals, the base would be actively involved in party affairs, and these would not be devoted principally to vetting Democratic candidates, but to making clear our own political agenda and publicizing it beyond the confines of that base.

Because it carries no promise (or does not principally make promises) of electoral *success* -- defined as winning elections with its own candidates -- the NP would withstand the great bugbear of third party efforts, namely *having nothing to show for all that work*. The NP shouldn't be seen as a one-time protest vote, but as the very opposite: a long-time commitment to institutionalizing a progressive presence in American party politics.

The message to potential NP supporters is therefore quite straightforward. An unadorned version goes something like this:

As you know, your interests are not being represented effectively. As you also know, you don't want to waste endless hours beating your head against a wall. By joining with us you can maximize your impact on the established parties, and send a signal more powerful than mere abstention. You will also have some fun, and learn some stuff. You can vote your convictions, and be part of a group of people who share those convictions. You can support an organization that represents the whole you, and not just a fraction of you (for instance, your dedication to racial equality or a safe environment), but you as a democratic citizen, and that does so not only in electoral politics, but in non-electoral politics as well.

Would a lot of people respond to *that* message? You decide.

4. What is Needed?

What is needed, as always, is some time, commitment, and money. More than all these, however, what is needed is some leadership. Someone with some authority needs to stand up and say "Let's do it."

Progressives these days suffer from what is sometimes called "the penguin problem." Penguins are pleasant animals, but they tend not to take risks. A group of penguins on an ice floe will waddle to the edge of the floe, and then stop. Each would like to get into the water to have a bite to eat, but none wants to be the first to go in the water. Each wants another to take the plunge -- to make sure the temperature is okay, and that the killer arctic whale is not waiting to gobble them up.

And so as a group they wait. They edge ever closer to the edge of the floe, each jostling the other forward, while holding itself back. Finally one penguin loses its balance, and topples in. Invariably it survives the cold water, and the killer arctic whale proves a phantom. This first penguin is immediately joined by the others. But a lot of swimming time and eating time has been wasted. It would have been better, of course, if all the penguins, or some good-sized group

of them, had simply talked among themselves, held flippers, and jumped.

That, roughly, is what is needed now. We need a group of progressive leaders in some state to take the plunge together. It doesn't have to be a big group, but it probably should be more than one.

Conclusion

What we've argued in this memo is that the present system of electoral politics in the U.S. is unacceptable, that traditional discussions of the options for progressives have misconstrued the issue, and that an alternative conception of a third party, here called the "New Party," is a credible and attractive vehicle for progressive energies.

Much of what we've said here is speculative. All of it is in need of improvement. What we hope to have done is make a plausible case for the NP. What we really hope is that you'll now help make it a reality.

TIME FOR A NEW PARTY?

Daniel Cantor & Joel Rogers
May 1990

Introduction

This memo outlines, in very brief form, some thoughts on a political party strategy for progressives in the 1990s.

What we have in mind is a cross between a "party within the party" strategy favored by some Democratic Party activists and the "plague on both your houses" stance adopted by many critics of both major parties. More specifically, we propose establishing a New Party (NP) that would have the capacity to run candidates on its own, but that would usually endorse candidates in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The NP would use its independent ballot line, and the threat to withhold endorsement on that line, to pressure the Democrats toward more progressive candidate selection. It would also use its line to provide a home to electable progressives not endorsed by either major party. Thus, it would take a critical stance toward the Democrats, but would generally not ask people to "waste" their votes on candidates that don't have a chance of getting elected. In this, the NP would behave like a progressive version of New York's Liberal Party. In addition to this electoral work, the NP would engage in a range of educational and mobilizing efforts of the sort that conventional parties do not. Indeed, this educational/mobilizing work would be the major activity of the party. The central goal of the NP, to which both this electoral and non-electoral work would contribute, would be to establish a credible and growing progressive presence in American politics -- a presence that would be felt in electoral arenas, but would be felt "on the ground" as well.

In filling out this conception, we proceed in three steps. First we say something about what motivates the NP idea. Second, we say something about the general concept of the NP, and about its program and structure. Third, we consider the feasibility of the effort.

1. Motivation: Why Bother?

This is simple enough. As progressives, we are committed to democratizing America. We want to revive the political arena as an arena of full debate among all citizens. We want to move public policy in a direction more in keeping with basic capacities for self-government. We are tired and outraged by the corruptions of U.S. party politics and the public policies they produce. We are fed up with declining living standards, rising poverty and inequality, bad jobs and bad wages, racial and gender injustice, and the denial of a fulfilling life to too many working Americans and their children. We are fed up with exporting violence abroad, lying to citizens at home, and leaving political power to the rich and infamous.

What do we want? We want to invest in ourselves: in health, education, housing, retraining, and physical infrastructure. We want an economy that is competitive, trade that is not ruinous to our own standards of living, and an ordering of economic relations that doesn't wreck the environment on which we all depend. We want to reward hard work: with better wages,

working conditions, and a say in the running of the economy. We want accountable government that works, and a political process that's not completely corrupted by big money interests. We want fair taxes, based on the ability to pay. We want to build a pluralist society where skin color doesn't determine life chances, gender doesn't determine labor market position, sexual preference doesn't lead to ostracism, every child is housed and fed and decently educated, and the parents of each child are respected for doing the hardest work of all -- raising and nurturing the children who will be our future. We want, in short, to take this country back. Government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It's that simple.

Forming a political party fueled by these convictions isn't going to change things overnight. But it will help. Right now, the progressive community is less than the sum of its parts. There is lots of activity, but the activity is fragmented. There are lots of coalitions, but the coalitions tend to be episodic, and organized around narrow issues. An encompassing organization like a party would help coordinate this activity, locate it within a broader agenda, and sustain it over time. In doing this, it would give progressive efforts greater weight and force.

We also believe that millions of Americans who share our progressive convictions are not now being reached by progressive groups. One reason is that they are simply so pressed with the pressures of work and family that they don't have time for political action. In providing some structure for political activity, including the very low-cost activity of voting, a political party can help reach these people and make our real numbers known. It will, in effect, lower the costs of political action. It will be a visible symbol for a certain set of commitments, and will harness those commitments to simple and low-cost political activity. In a country where "politics" is usually identified with "electoral politics," not having some credible relation to the electoral system makes us marginal. Finally, we sense very widespread agreement among progressives on a social democratic program -- investment in education and a range of non-military public goods, promoting race and gender justice, protecting the environment, empowering working people to exert more democratic control over the economy. Why not announce that agreement, and move on it?

2. The NP: Concept, Program, Structure

Concept: Our conception of the NP departs from a familiar discussion among progressives, occurring each election cycle, that we think has reached a dead end. The discussion concerns how progressives should relate to electoral politics. On the one hand, it's apparent that the Democratic Party offers only a devil's bargain of alliance. While it remains the unhappy electoral home of most progressive forces in the U.S., it is thoroughly dominated by business, and has shifted rightward in recent years. Considering what labor has gotten for its generation long alliance with the Democrats is enough to make this point. On the other hand, the history of third party efforts in the U.S. is dismal. More than a thousand have been formed since the emergence of the modern party system in the 1860s, but none has ever had much electoral success in the U.S., which lacks proportional representation. Thus working inside the Democratic Party seems hopeless, and working outside the Democratic Party seems hopeless too.

In face of this dilemma, debate among progressives waffles back and forth between

"moderate" and "radical" strategies of relation to the Democrats. Moderates argue that the Democrats are the only (electoral) game in town, and that the best we can do is to try to extract concessions from them. This, moderates argue, is best done through threats of abstention. If the Democrats don't do what we like, we won't vote at all. The problem with this view is that abstention threats are seldom enforced, and are in any case weak punishment. The Democrats can live with progressive voters dropping out of the system; they simply shift further to the right. Radicals argue that the Democrats are hopeless, and that real power comes from mobilizing outside the electoral system. While correct on the need for non-electoral mobilization, this view underestimates the actual need for some connection to conventional politics. In brief, unless progressives take up some relation to the electoral process, it will be hard for them to maximize their influence on policy, and hard for others to take them seriously as political actors.

Our proposed solution is two-fold.

First, we wish to stay in the electoral process, but to expand the range of options available to progressive voters. Instead of a simple choice of voting Democratic or abstaining, we wish to develop a credible threat to run our candidates, and to use that threat to broker Democratic concessions more aggressively, and to signal to and consolidate our own base. This can be done by achieving ballot status (something much easier to achieve and maintain than winning elections), and then using the NP ballot line either to cross-endorse candidates of other parties that are to our liking, or running a candidate of our own. Again, imagine this as a progressive (and honest) version of the Liberal Party in New York. The Liberals have an influence on New York electoral politics that vastly exceeds their numbers. The NP could have the same.

Second, the NP would supplement this modest electoral strategy with a substantial effort at education and mobilization. This we imagine will take many different forms: publicizing the NP's own program; training activists; mounting issues campaigns on topics of general public concern (e.g., the peace dividend or national health insurance); intervening in and showing solidarity with progressives in particular battles; generating policy research; and developing speakers bureaus, alternative media, and other means of building popular discussion.

The point of the NP would not just be to occupy the political landscape, but to transform it. Its goal would be the establishment of a more cohesive and coordinated progressive presence in American politics. Building up from the state level, it would build from the bottom up within those states. We wish to recreate a public sphere for progressive politics in this country, and a credible threat to established powers. We are in this for the long haul.

Program: We see the NP as an explicitly social democratic organization, with an ideology roughly like that of Northern European (e.g., Swedish) labor movements. That is, it would take its task as one of working within the constraints of capitalism, even as it was critical of the fundamentally undemocratic character of capitalism. It would be committed to the proposition that fundamental democratic change requires the organization and empowerment of working people. And its most basic commitment would be to democracy -- the idea that all members of a political order should be free and equal in determining the terms of their association. From these abstract commitments would come a series of specific programmatic

commitments -- on taxes, social and military policy, racial and gender justice, even the design and administration of public programs -- which would have a "red/green" coloration. That is, they would combine a social democratic emphasis on worker empowerment, equity, and democratic control of capital, with explicit attention to environmental, peace, feminist, and racial concerns. The NP would thus seek to further a new public philosophy -- practical as well as principled -- to advance democratic aims in a pluralist society and internationalized economy.

Structure: We propose establishing the NP on a state-by-state basis. With each state, there would be local NP chapters, group affiliates, and individual members. A state-by-state organizing plan is chosen on grounds of opportunism and realism. States are more important than at any time in recent memory. There is more power, and more opportunities for innovative use of that power, at the state and local level than at any time since the Second World War. And operating at the state level of course enables us to pick our targets of opportunity, a luxury not available in national mobilizations. In each state, the NP would have a minimal staff, divided roughly equally between field organizers (who would travel around the state, publicizing NP activities and helping to organize new chapters) and an office staff (charged with "development," bookkeeping, and the more impersonal forms of membership service). This staff, and its executive director, would be accountable to a governing board, composed in roughly equal measure of representatives of select chapters (elected on a state-wide basis), and "at large" members drawn from the leadership of prominent group sponsors (e.g., leaders of unions affiliated with the effort).

3. Feasibility

Can the NP be done? It depends, of course, on the amount of energy people are willing to put into it, and we can't answer that question here. The immediate barriers to such a strategy don't seem fatal, however. On the electoral side, various state regulations restrict the ability to cross-endorse nominees of a different party. But these appear highly vulnerable to challenge, and in any case, getting and maintaining ballot status for a new party is a lot easier than winning elections. On the non-electoral side, the only real barrier is our own conception of what progressive activity entails. We think, for reasons indicated above, that some coordinating, long-term, programmatic organization would be especially useful right now. It's simply a question of whether other progressives agree.

Two things do seem clear, however, both of which weigh in favor of making an NP effort.

The first is unorganized public opinion. The point has been made before, but the full reality of it has not yet sunk in among progressives: the American public is *much more progressive* than American public policy. Vast majorities of the public recognize that economic threats, not military ones, are the keys to their country's future. Vast majorities favor increased public investment on a range of non-military public goods -- from clean air and water to child care and yes, even programs for the very poor -- thereby aiming to increase economic performance and enhance the quality of life. And vast majorities are willing to pay the taxes needed to fund such initiatives, if they have some reasonable assurance that the money will be

extracted in a fair way, and actually spent on the programs to which it is dedicated.

These are natural building blocs for a progressive political program of a populist stripe. If mounted in a credible fashion, we think such a program would resonate with large sections of the public.

Second, we see much evidence within the progressive community itself that people are tired of narrow issue politics, and anxious to move beyond short-term coalitions.

Consider organized labor. Even as its national stature continues to dwindle, the last several years have seen a range of efforts to rethink labor's "go it alone" strategy of self help. The noteworthy efforts of recent months -- the 1199 contract campaign, the NYNEX struggle, the victory at BASF, the Pittston strike -- demonstrate diverse organizing tactics, with diverse constituencies, but a common thread of broad alliances and explicit political mobilization to advance worker aims.

Or consider the broad-based citizen lobbying and electoral groups now operating in 30 states; the maturing alliances among progressives around regional industrial planning in Michigan, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania; the nascent coalitions of farmers, unions, and consumers to fight destructive biotechnologies in the Midwest; the innumerable voter initiatives and citizen referenda, like the Nader-led insurance reform in California and the Kentucky Commonwealth's work against coal companies in that state; the sophisticated militancy of housing groups on the savings & loan bailout; the vital and anti-corporate toxics movement in thousands of local communities; the reproductive rights movement; the networks of citizens, often church based, that have successfully rejected the most aggressive fantasies of the American right in Central America.

All this activity is, again, less than the sum of its parts. But this fact too is widely recognized, which provides a basis for beginning to change it. What already marks the best of these efforts is explicit recognition that single issue politics is not tolerable (even when it seems necessary). Community and issue activists across the country are clear that connections among issues must be found, and relations among progressives must be cemented, in the service of articulating a broader social agenda.

If we are right, the NP can perform an invaluable service in focusing these "thousand points of light" that now make up the American progressive-populist community. And in so doing it can draw on reserves of feeling among those who are not now activists, and those who would never dream of defining themselves as activists, but who endorse a progressive agenda.

We don't know (nobody does) if trying this would transform American politics. But we are pretty confident that it's worth a try. The basic conditions seem in place. The need is real. And we don't see any point in waiting.

What do you think?

NEW PARTY PRINCIPLES

Daniel Cantor & Joel Rogers
May 1990

What would be the basic principles of the New Party (NP), and what would be the outlines of its program?

1. Principles

The basic NP principles are straightforward.

We are committed to democracy -- the idea that citizens should be free and equal in determining the actions of government and the terms of public policy. As democrats, we are committed to equal civil rights and liberties, and to making sure that people have the material resources needed to exercise those rights and liberties. As democrats, we are committed to the empowerment of working people. We believe everyone, and not just rich white males, has the capacity to order their own affairs, and to make a meaningful contribution to social life. Everyone should have a chance to develop those capacities and make that contribution, and everyone should have the power to seize that chance.

As democrats, we are committed to economic, racial, gender, and political justice. We want a fair distribution of the rewards of a prosperous and ecologically sustainable economy, strong worker organizations, and much greater public accountability by business. We want a pluralist society in which race and gender in no way harm self-esteem or chances for a satisfying and constructive life. We want a political system to which all have access, in which public debate is free and government is accountable.

2. Program

What the above commitments imply about program we also take to be straightforward, in broad outline if not in details. Here we first order these implications with conventional policy categories, and then briefly state some cross-cutting themes.

Economic Policy: Perhaps the most commonly voiced constraint on doing anything progressive in American politics right now is the alleged lack of money available for social needs. The NP economic program should address this head on. We favor deep cuts in military spending (now facilitated by the official ending of the Cold War), sharply higher taxes on wealthier Americans, and internalization of the costs of certain expensive boondoggles (e.g., on nuclear waste, savings and loan associations, housing scandals, etc.) by the businesses in those sectors. Even a minimal version of this program would generate significant amounts of cash -- on the order of \$50 billion annually -- for new programs. The program we have in mind would generate several times that -- something on the order of \$100-\$200 billion annually. We can discuss specific projections and schemes, but the basic point is to insist on a large investment pool.

With this pool, then, we should invest in those things that governments can do that markets don't do well. This means a range of public goods -- education and retraining, child care, nutrition programs, physical infrastructure, environmental cleanup, etc. There are any number of sensible plans out there (the plans from the 1988 Jackson campaign in 1988 being among the best) for how such monies should be distributed.

In addition to simply putting resources into areas in desperate need of support, we should use public investments to advance other desired ends -- e.g. greater citizen involvement in economic affairs, more corporate accountability, and better labor market policies. Thus, for example, increased spending on education should go hand in hand with increased incentives to parental involvement in schooling; spending on training should be tied to sanctions on business that don't assume a reasonable share of training costs themselves; projects to repair the crumbling infrastructure and environment should be used in part as employment and training programs for those now shut out of the labor market; industrial and other economic development policies should be geared not only to increasingly competitiveness, but to moving toward ecological sanity in our economic affairs (e.g., through promotion of new production techniques aimed at toxic source reduction, or developing of up-stream and down-stream markets for industrial by-products, or more encompassing markets for and incentives to recycling).

In these ways and others, public investments should contribute not only to the physical infrastructure and human capital requirements of a mature economy, but to building the "social infrastructure" on which high-wage high-productivity economies depend. This social infrastructure consists of things like cooperative and mutually respectful labor relations (in which unions are an essential part); a work culture that sees workers (not just engineers and managers) as key decision-makers in product development and the application of new technologies; a better integration of work and learning, in which skills are continually upgraded; a more integrated treatment of work and family obligations, such that people don't have to choose between parenting and good jobs; cooperation among and between firms, unions, and the government to pool resources and share the costs of training and research and development. In brief, the institutional elements that foster a more cooperative, respectful, and socially obligated economic culture. Such arrangements encourage a view of the economy itself as a sort of public good, to which we must all contribute, and from which we should all be able to draw.

At the more macro level, we should reverse the stop/go (and wreck the future) policies of the last several years, which have coupled tight monetary policy with loose fiscal policy, and engage in a more pay-as-you-go fiscal plan, coupled with much looser monetary policy. This will help balance our international accounts, and spur investment at home. It will also have good effects on world-wide interest rates, which are a major bar to development elsewhere, and will put downward pressure on the chronically overvalued dollar.

On trade, we favor recognizing the need to "manage" trade in certain industries of particular social interest, situating such management within a broader effort to expand trade on

fair grounds, and equalizing the benefits and burdens of actors in the international trading system.

On trade "management," we recognize legitimate social interests in protecting or encouraging the development of certain industries and technologies here in the U.S., or planning the flow of jobs and investment in and out of different sectors. Such interests should be explicitly acknowledged in trade negotiations with other countries, and we should not shrink from pressing for arrangements that will satisfy them. In general, however, we see the form this "encouragement" should take as one implemented less through the imposition of new tariffs and quotas on foreign goods than through domestic content restrictions on market access, and increased efforts to assure that the conditions under which goods are produced here are reasonable. Call this a "tend our own garden" strategy. The basic idea here is that, as a society, we have interests in preserving and developing a base of good, high-wage, high-productivity jobs and industries. We should not, however, identify social interests with the interests of U.S. firms. Whether the capital for those industries comes from U.S. capitalists, German capitalists, or Japanese capitalists is infinitely less important than the fact of their development.

On trade expansion, there is a question of domestic supply and foreign demand. On supply, the rest of the NP economic program, aimed at creating a high-wage high-productivity economy will do much to redress decline in the U.S. competitive position. On foreign demand, we should seek to increase it in equitable ways. Especially important is increasing demand in the Third World. This will be aided by the proposed regime of low interest rates, which will reduce burdens on poorer nations and generally facilitate new investment, growth, and demand. In addition, we favor debt relief for heavily indebted developing nations. There are a number of reasonable plans out there that can do this, without destroying the banks that have profited so handsomely from Third World misery.

Finally, on the sharing of benefits and burdens in the international trading system, we favor the familiar principles of reciprocity and multilateralism, but with a Keynesian bite. Specifically, in seeking adjustment in international accounts, we favor pressure on surplus nations to increase their domestic consumption of imports, rather than pressure on deficit nations to impose austerity at home. The latter approach, favored by pillars of the "free trade" establishment, prolongs dependence and puts the burdens of adjustment on weak economies, while also reducing the aggregate demand that we wish to increase. The former approach, favored by Keynes but not adopted in the postwar system, would achieve compatibility between a freer exchange among economies and the more equal development of them.

Summarizing, the basic elements in the NP economic strategy would be: tax progressivity and heavy new investment in non-military public goods, increased attention to the social prerequisites of high productivity (including but not limited to increased union representation), lower interest rates, and a policy of selectively managed trade, increased competitiveness of domestic industry, and debt relief and other measures aimed at boosting worldwide demand. Throughout, economic policy would be directed to meeting actual human needs, including the especially pressing needs of working parents and their children; to ensuring equity and participation in economic affairs; and to moving the economy toward environmental

sustainability.

All elements in this would be vast improvements over present policy. Together, they are a credible economic program for a more just and competitive economy.

Social Policy: This is pretty easy. There are a variety of very basic social needs -- in education, housing, nutrition, and health -- that are not being met. There are millions of Americans living in poverty, and millions more suffering the strains of balancing the obligations of work and family. And race and gender based discrimination remains an invidious fact of American life.

On the issue of basic needs, we should make major initiatives in health, housing, and education. How to pay for this has already been covered. What to do is clear enough. In health, we need comprehensive, nationally administered health care, as in Canada. This system is cheaper than what we have; it controls costs; and it covers everybody. In housing, we need to provide new forms of mortgage assistance to young couples, and push for the "social housing sector" approach favored by housing activists. The latter would give people the pride of home ownership without the costs, chiefly by using public monies to front-end capitalization requirements, rather than back-end interest payments to private developers and their banks. On education, we need national standards for the K-12 system, increased funding, and much much higher levels of parental involvement. Perhaps above all, however, we need to repair the post-high school training system, which does next to nothing for those 2/3rds of all Americans who do not go on to or finish college. Doing this requires a better integration of work and school experience, and continual investment in retraining of workers once they get into the labor market.

On poverty and income distribution, many gains will flow from measures already mentioned. The NP economic program will improve the quality (including wage level) of jobs, and the demand for employment. And the address of such basic needs as health and housing costs will pull people back onto a more reasonable living standard. On poverty, we should change AFDC to a mandated and universal child support system, substantially increase the Earned Income Tax Credit while also raising the minimum wage, and in other ways reform the tax and benefit structure to provide universal national support to families, while rewarding work and encouraging movement out of dependence. At the base of this system, then, would be certain sorts of public assistance provided to all. Just above that, and encouraging people to move above that, would be a variety of "fringe" benefits available to the working poor, structured in such a way as to reward work effort. The first move will help remove the stigmatization of those on welfare by universalizing national support for children. The second will remove disincentives to welfare dependency, and make peace between those with good jobs and those struggling to find them.

Race and gender discrimination will also be aided by the above measures. Unionization of low-pay sectors will disproportionately benefit the minorities and women clustered in them; an increased minimum wage will have similar effects; revamped child support, health, an education programs will address some of the most obvious sources of disparity along race and

gender lines. In addition, of course, we clearly favor aggressive application of existing law on affirmative action, and are pro-choice. And we favor, as a *centerpiece of the NP's social and economic agenda*, a range of measures more specifically addressed to the problems faced by working families, and in particular to the employed women within them. Among these would be: actions aimed at increasing employee choice in working hours and arrangements; mandated maternal and parental leave benefits; increased child care support; and national commitments to pay equity and comparable worth, phased in across all industries and over a specified period.

Foreign and Military Policy: The end of the Cold War creates enormous possibilities for redefining the ends of U.S. foreign policy goals. Briefly, we favor the ends of democratic development, and international cooperation on issues of global concern (e.g., North/South income disparities, international worker rights and other aspects of international law, environmental concerns). Do the former requires respect for the sovereignty and varied circumstance of other nations, greatly increased transfers of income, technology, and education, and the promotion of regional strategies of economic development within a more equitable international trading system, and a more ecologically sound one. Doing the latter requires forsaking ambitions to dominate all other countries and peoples, and throwing in our lot with humankind. The rest is a matter of detail.

Finally, this sort of program has several cross-cutting themes. Inelegantly expressed, and in no particular order, these include: (1) the importance of public goods, and the appropriateness and necessity of government action in securing them -- including the satisfaction of certain basic needs, and the preservation of the environment; (2) emphasis on, and explicit promotion and recognition of, socially desirable values of cooperation, responsibility, reciprocity, fair dealing, and hard work; (3) an obvious emphasis on the need to recouple high-wages and high-productivity (relinking a "productivist" orientation to equity concerns); (4) a strong emphasis on equity, but implemented less through overt redistribution than through programs securing *real* equal opportunity, establishing national standards and comprehensiveness (as in health, or child support) on basic needs, and securing a strong economy; (5) an enlargement of the notion of contribution -- e.g., to include workers and unions in the economy and parents (including single mother parents) in the society; (6) an emphasis on the interdependence of the society -- of work and learning, family and work, active citizenship and effective government; (7) a related emphasis on the social dimensions of the economy, and the need to order the economy to serve social needs -- including, preeminently, the needs of employed parents, and the need to save the environment; (8) a special emphasis on the needs of women in the paid labor force, and of working class families and low-wage workers; (9) an emphasis on internationalism, and mutual respect among nations, offered both as a matter of principle and prudence; (10) an emphasis on racial justice and gender justice, and securing the true pluralism of democratic order.

In terms of established ideologies on the left in America, these sorts of commitments amount to a view that is more socially conservative (hard work, family, etc.) and more "productivist" (but still shaded green) than seems the norm. On the whole -- and we think this is important to the general conception -- it is also less exhaustively "rights based." While the above program would vastly expand citizen entitlements, it would do so in a framework that also emphasized citizen obligation. And its preferred enforcement mechanism for the new social

contract would not be in the courts, but on the ground -- in the organized empowerment of workers and citizens (through unions and other sorts of democratic secondary associations).

S U E !

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May 1990

State law prohibitions or restrictions of multi-party endorsement (MPE) -- defined here as the endorsement of a single candidate by more than one party -- appear highly vulnerable to constitutional challenge. We could challenge them on First and Fourteenth Amendment grounds as unconstitutional restrictions on associational liberty. Several recent Supreme Court cases provide the basis for this judgment. We note two here.

The first is *Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut*, 470 U.S. 208 (1986). There the Court considered a Connecticut statute barring non-party member participation in party primaries, where the party concerned did not bar such participation. In a 5-4 opinion, the Court found the Connecticut statute an unconstitutional restriction on party members' associational freedoms. For such restriction to be justified, a "compelling" state interest in the restriction needs to be shown. Connecticut, whose principal argument for the restriction was that it simplified primary election administration, failed to make this showing.

The *Tashjian* Court did not reach the MPE issue that concerns us (though its ruling on state regulations of primary participation may be relevant in New York). But in both the majority opinion, written by Justice Marshall (joined by Justices Blackmun, Brennan, Powell, and White) and the lead dissenting opinion, written by Justice Scalia (joined by Justices Rehnquist and O'Connor), *dicta* suggested that the Court would find a state prohibition on MPE unconstitutional. Justice Marshall observed:

Were the State ... to provide that only Party members might be selected as the Party's chosen nominees for public office, such a prohibition of potential association would clearly infringe upon the rights of the Party's members under the First Amendment to organize with like-minded citizens in support of common political goals (479 U.S., at 215).

And in dissent, Justice Scalia affirmed that "The ability of the members of [a political party] to select their own candidate ... unquestionably implicates an associational freedom" (479 U.S., at 235-236). He distinguished the situation in *Tashjian* from those in which he would find state regulation objectionable on the ground that in *Tashjian* there was "no question of restricting the ability of the Party's members to select *whatever candidate they desire*" (479 U.S., at 235, emphasis added).

Our second case is *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*, 109 S. Ct. 1013 (1989). There a unanimous Court struck down a California prohibition on pre-primary party endorsements of candidates and various restrictions on the organization, composition, and terms of office of party governing bodies. Again the Court applied the "compelling interest" test of state restrictions on associational freedoms, and again found the state rationale wanting. Citing *Tashjian* (including Scalia's first bit of *dicta* above) and other cases, the Court declared that

"Freedom of association also encompasses a political party's decisions about the identity of, and the process for electing, its leaders" (109 S.Ct., at 1024).

Tashjian and *Eu* are lead cases in a broader series of decisions in which the Court has overturned state regulation of party behavior. In conjunction, the general direction of these cases, and the specific *dicta* in *Tashjian* and *Eu*, strongly suggest that MPE bars are vulnerable before this Court.

Finally, we might emphasize that in overturning bars on MPE the ever-growing conservatism of the Federal judiciary actually seems to be on our side. The reason is that judicial conservatism increasingly takes the form of Court insistence on the sanctity of "negative" freedoms -- freedom *from* the exercise of state power, including regulative powers of the sort implicated in the state party cases -- as against "positive" freedoms to *invoke* state protection. In a word, it's a libertarian conservatism. This augurs well for efforts, as in a challenge to MPE bars, to roll back state regulation of political activity.