

## CHAPTER SIX

### CAMPAIGNS AND COALITIONS: BUILDING MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

The electoral reform agenda outlined in Chapter Five cannot be pursued in isolation. Third parties and independent candidates already compete in American elections and will eventually need to be primary actors in a multiparty democracy. This chapter, therefore, first investigates the potential for the rise to prominence of an independent candidate or a current third party. Because party development will likely occur in combination with electoral reform, this chapter next considers how electoral reform pursued at the local level can develop state-level third parties and set the stage for a multiparty system. The chapter then considers how the variety of activists, both inside and outside of parties, can pursue a coordinated agenda despite their diversity. It considers potential coalitions, the role of social movements, and the linkages necessary to produce major change. Finally, the chapter explores how a movement toward multiparty democracy can create an ideology of reform and enlist the support of the public.

#### **Independent Candidacies**

The most direct route to multiparty politics would be a realignment of the electoral system based on the rise of an independent candidate. A prominent presidential candidate could either advance the electoral reform agenda or single-handedly disrupt the two-party system through a victorious campaign. The 1912 Progressive campaign was

grounded in Roosevelt's own views and personality.<sup>1</sup> Based on the current condition of the electorate, a modern independent campaign could follow a similar path. The campaign could mirror Charles DeGaulle's rise to power from the radical center in France, drawing on public alienation and government gridlock. Pre-DeGaulle France was characterized by political parties that had lost membership and public affection, similar to the parties of modern America.<sup>2</sup> According to Gordon and Benjamin Black, "Centrist third-party movements came to dominate politics in France under the Gaullists and in India under the Congress Party. Almost certainly, sometime in the near future a new, successful, nationwide third party will emerge in American politics, and the experts will fail to predict its success."<sup>3</sup>

It is unclear, however, who that candidate could be. Candidate recruitment is a major problem for current minor parties and prevents viable independent campaigns. Institutional constraints prevent many high-profile candidates from attempting independent candidacies after considering the obstacles, and so altering the political landscape by enacting the reforms mentioned earlier could cause more candidates to run as independents. Jesse Ventura's victory was made possible by same day voter registration, public financing, and Internet campaigning. Having observed that the independent candidate credibility problem is enhanced by failure to find appropriate running mates, electoral reforms could also play an important role in convincing popular

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur A. Ekirch, *Progressivism in America: A Study of the Era from Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 154.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon S. Black and Benjamin D. Black, *The Politics of American Discontent: How a New Party Can Make Democracy Work Again* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Black and Black, 161.

figures to run alongside those willing to attempt independent candidates, improving the chances of independent success.

Though party organizations have become stronger in recent years, the "party-in-the-electorate" has been replaced by the "party-in-elections" that can change between campaigns and is less likely to feature identification with the party.<sup>4</sup> This leaves the door open for independent candidates to create a temporary coalition and rely on it for success. As noted earlier, the most viable third-party candidates historically have been those that have splintered from the major parties. Mavericks within the major parties may therefore be the best place to look for future independent candidates. In the midst of a summer 1995 media blitz about the potential candidacy of Colin Powell, a *U.S. News and World Report* poll showed that Powell had 27 percent of the popular vote as an independent candidate, tied with Bob Dole and first in California.<sup>5</sup>

Richard Lamm, a former Democratic governor of Colorado, challenged Perot to the 1996 Reform Party nomination and convinced a former Republican congressman, Edward Zschau, to be his running mate. Perot won under questionable circumstances.<sup>6</sup> The Lamm-Zschau ticket could have been an effective force in the campaign and it provides a model of potential success. A former Democrat could join with a former Republican to run on a centrist reform platform. Even if popular independent candidates lose, they may convince others to run. According to Rosenstone et al., "Prestigious

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<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Hasen, "Entrenching the Duopoly," *Supreme Court Review*, 1997, 354.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Bryce, "The Preservation of a Two-Party System in the United States" (M.A. diss., University of Western Ontario, 1996), 1.

<sup>6</sup> John C. Green and William Binning, "Surviving Perot: The Origins and Future of the Reform Party," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 92.

candidates are 28 percent more likely to run in the subsequent presidential election when third parties poll 5 percent of the popular vote than when the major parties monopolized all but 0.1 percent of the ballots cast. If minor parties get 15 percent of the vote, the probability of a prestigious politician bolting in the next election increases by 52 percent."<sup>7</sup>

A successful independent campaign for president would need to include a broad agenda. Candidates could fight against easy targets such as "corporate welfare" and provide a coherent response to corporate power like that which resonated in Ralph Nader's campaign. An independent could also woo the right with proposals for tax code reforms or a flattening of the tax code such as those that were advanced effectively by Steve Forbes. Any independent should also emphasize the environment and education, the prominent issues among moderates. Perot's 1992 agenda included an education plan similar to the one advanced recently by George W. Bush that included school choice and national standards but he chose not to talk much about it.<sup>8</sup>

### *Perot's Potential*

With party allegiance declining, institutional discontent rising, and economic conditions deteriorating, 1992 was a prime year for waging an independent campaign. With unlimited resources and a popular homespun style, Ross Perot was the candidate poised to take advantage of that political climate. Receiving 19 percent of the popular vote is an impressive performance for an independent but the campaign's potential level of success was much higher: Perot could have won. By May, Ross Perot surpassed Bill

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<sup>7</sup> Black and Black, 210.

Clinton in the polls and by June, Perot was at 37 percent support and in first place.<sup>9</sup> Political pundits Stuart Rothenburg and Charlie Cook were on CNN arguing whether, if the election were held that day, it would be thrown into the House of Representatives or whether Perot would win outright. Perot was ahead in California, Texas, Washington, Oregon, and Colorado.<sup>10</sup>

Unwillingness to follow a sustained campaign plan, an unfortunate decision to drop out of the race, and an inability to develop a coherent agenda prevented a Perot victory. A different kind of campaign could have produced a major realignment. Perot's major fault in campaign strategy was not following the advice of his paid professionals. Perot hired Republican Ed Rollins and Democrat Hamilton Jordan as experienced advisers to the campaign but they eventually resigned. Perot also hired and later fired Hal Riney, the advertising agent who had produced Reagan's "Morning in America" campaign. Rollins later reported that he gave Perot three options before resigning: first, Perot could run a professional campaign and win; second, he could continue the unprofessional campaign and lose; or third, he could quit. Perot chose the third option one day later.

Due to unlimited finances, Perot could have followed professional advice and made a credible run for the Presidency. Perot spent \$69 million; the Bush and Clinton campaigns, in comparison, cost over \$200 million each including soft money.<sup>11</sup> Perot's

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<sup>8</sup> Ross Perot, *United We Stand: How We Can Take Back Our Country* (New York: Hyperion, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Loevy, *The Flawed Path To The Presidency 1992* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>11</sup> Black and Black, 127.

1992 income was most likely more than \$300 million and he could have easily spent more money on the campaign.<sup>12</sup> Perot could have accepted a \$147 million media campaign that was developed by his consultants, but he did not get along with the advisors and did not like the ads.<sup>13</sup> Perot also rejected a multi-million dollar direct mail campaign to his petition-signers and a \$7 million early television advertising campaign to respond to media criticisms.<sup>14</sup> An early and sustained campaign could have prevented his slip in the polls and possibly increased his standing.

The most common complaint Perot faced during the campaign was that he was not articulating specific proposals or addressing major issues. This complaint surfaced even though the largest bloc of voters in 1992 was socially moderate, fiscally conservative, and worried most about maintaining democratic control over a runaway government, corresponding to Perot's own positions.<sup>15</sup> Perot's problem was that he was not specific enough in the beginning and became too specific by the end. Perot did not need to stipulate every program he would cut and every tax he would raise. He could have just advocated the Balanced Budget Amendment and line-item veto. For entitlements, he could have proposed nonpartisan commissions instead of cuts.

As a compromise between the lack of issues that he ran on initially and the specific deficit reduction package he ran on eventually, Perot could have presented himself as both a progressive and a populist. After several congressional scandals, the

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<sup>12</sup> Loevy, 125.

<sup>13</sup> Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 240.

<sup>14</sup> Loevy, 178.

<sup>15</sup> Black and Black, 17.

need to reform political institutions resonated with voters. Centralization in Washington and gridlock were both under attack. Fourteen states passed term limits initiatives in 1992; it was an important populist issue where Perot disagreed with the major party candidates. Perot began creating a campaign finance reform plan including free television time, enforceable limits, lobbying reforms, and bans on PACs and soft money. He could have used that issue as the "reform that makes all other reforms possible" but failed to articulate it as the key first step.

The economy was clearly the most salient issue in 1992 and Buchanan had successfully used populist protectionism against Bush in the Republican primaries.<sup>16</sup> Perot's best performance was in areas that had experienced economic downturns and he could have easily been a better spokesperson for the discontented than Clinton. Perot could have successfully convinced people that, as a businessman, he knew how to create jobs through education, job training, and trade. The trade issue that Perot became committed to after the 1992 election could have played a bigger role during the campaign. Combining trade with concerns about jobs moving abroad and immigration could have produced a coherent nationalist agenda that appealed to the populist center.

According to John Anderson's political consultant David Garth, Perot actually proves that independent candidates can establish legitimacy: "This man had 26 percent in the polls, dropped out and made a fool of himself, came back in with a very sad vice presidential candidate, admiral something-or-other, and he still got 19 percent of the

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<sup>16</sup> John Hanchette, "Campaign Leaders Review 1992 Election," *Gannett News Service*, 10 November 1992, 1.

vote."<sup>17</sup> This may indicate that other candidates could learn from Perot's mistakes and make a credible independent run for the presidency.

### *A Maverick Majority?*

John McCain has recently been mentioned as a prospective independent candidate because he commands a separate national power base of support from President Bush. According to *Los Angeles Times* reporter Ron Brownstein, "The ill feelings [between Bush and McCain] have reached the point where loyalists in both camps no longer exclude the possibility that the Arizonan could bolt the GOP in 2004 and seek the presidency as an independent."<sup>18</sup> *Newsweek's* Howard Fineman agrees that McCain is positioning himself to run for president: "I think what intrigues him, and certainly a lot of his supporters, is the idea of an Independent candidacy."<sup>19</sup>

McCain has denied the speculation repeatedly but his popularity may convince him that he can win despite the obstacles to an independent run. In 2000, McCain was the most popular presidential candidate nationwide.<sup>20</sup> Seventy-two percent of Americans had favorable opinions of him, compared to just 16 percent who had unfavorable opinions.<sup>21</sup> A Gallup Poll also found that 41 percent of independents would have been

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<sup>17</sup> Bryce, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald Brownstein and Janet Hook, "In The GOP Family, A Feud of Presidential Proportions," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 March 2000, sec. 1A, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Howard Fineman, *CNBC's Hardball With Chris Matthews*, 2 April 2001. Available: Lexis-Nexis. Accessed: 17 April 2001.

<sup>20</sup> CNN Poll, 7 February 2000. Available: <<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/resources/polls.html>>. Accessed 17 April 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Newport, "McCain Remains a Very Well-Liked Political Figure," *Gallup Poll Report*, 10 May 2000. Available: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr000510.asp>>. Accessed 17 April 2001.



more likely to vote for Bush if McCain had been the Vice Presidential nominee.<sup>22</sup> A CNN poll even showed McCain beating Gore in a head-to-head race 59 percent to 35 percent.<sup>23</sup> McCain voters were moderate in ideology and he often drew just as heavily from Independents and Democrats as from Republicans.<sup>24</sup>

If McCain began preparing for an independent campaign several years in advance, he might be able to develop an early lead. One primary advantage McCain would have over other potential independent candidates is his support from the media. The McCain life story fits journalistic formulas; from the *New York Times* to *Time*, most of the press has portrayed him as a brave Vietnam prisoner of war with "straight talk" to challenge cigarette manufacturers and Washington lobbyists.<sup>25</sup> If McCain could run a campaign with constant free media coverage, he might be able to overcome financial constraints.

McCain has already begun to formulate a centrist platform with support for the Patients Bill of Rights and gun control; he has established a moderate position on taxes but remained fiscally conservative on spending. McCain could also effectively take the middle ground on social issues, attracting the socially moderate voters who reject the religious right's influence on the Republicans at the same time that he avoided turning off the social conservatives by emphasizing his personal integrity and his life history.

It is unclear what other prominent figures might decide to pursue independent campaigns for the presidency. Donald Trump and John Anderson recently considered

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Benedetto, "Bush Has Slight Edge on Gore," *USA Today*, 2 May 2000, sec. A, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> CNN Poll.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "Special Analysis: McCain Voters," *Gallup Poll Report*, 3 March 2000. Available: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr000303b.asp>>. Accessed 17 April 2001.

<sup>25</sup> David Plotz, "Sen. John McCain: The Media Want Him to be President," *Slate*, 27 June 1998. Available: <<http://slate.msn.com/Assessment/98-06-27/Assessment.asp>>. Accessed 17 April 2001.

entering the Reform Party primary and all types of politicians have been pressured to run independently. Perhaps with an electoral reform movement underway, viable candidates would be more willing to enter the campaign.

### *Independent Advocacy of Electoral Reform*

Even if independent campaigns are unsuccessful, they can work to highlight electoral reform issues. In the aftermath of 1992, the major parties looked to Perot voters to determine what they could do to win back their support. Perot's campaign increased the salience of deficit reduction and campaign finance reform. Any successful third-party candidacy could use its moment of influence to gain major party support for electoral reform.

Ralph Nader made a major impact on the 2000 election and could have received many more votes in a less-competitive election. His supporters were quite dedicated; he was the first candidate ever to receive more than 1 percent of the vote as a write-in candidate in any state, winning 2.45 percent in Ohio and 2.12 percent Wyoming.<sup>26</sup> The Nader campaign also served as an example of how independent candidacies can help advance the electoral reform agenda, according to Dan Johnson-Weinberger. "I think the Nader campaign really gave electoral reform a big boost by campaigning on IRV and PR. I think that helped teach hundreds of thousands of politically aware people what IRV and proportional representation are."<sup>27</sup>

Nader's major electoral reform campaigns came after the election. If he or other independents were able to stay visible and focused on electoral reform, they could help

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Winger, "Green Party Showings," *Ballot Access News* 16 no. 8 (2001). Available: <<http://www.ballot-access.org/2000/1116.html>>. Accessed 3 March 2001.

advance the issues. Serving as an interest group between election years, Perot's United We Stand movement put international trade high on the political agenda. Early in the twentieth century, the major parties were able to defeat the Populist and Socialist uprisings but were forced to adopt many of their proposals.

Though independent candidacies can provide a platform for issue discussion, they do not necessarily translate into third-party creation. According to John Anderson, "Despite a 5 percent increase in the presidential vote in 1992 over the previous election, there is no real evidence of heightened political interest in party building even among the dissatisfied voters."<sup>28</sup> Independent voters would thus be most effective if they pursued electoral reform as an issue group rather than by creating a party.

### **Current Third Parties**

Having noted that third parties have been a major cause of the primary electoral realignments of American history, it is logical to assume that one major path to multiparty democracy is the rise of one of America's current third parties. According to Dwyre and Kolodny,

Any gains minor parties make in elections can help change the system in their favor by pushing the present limits of political institutions... On the one hand, minor party activity can put pressure on the major parties, and on the other hand, minor parties must be poised to take advantage of failures by the major parties or a legal breakthrough if their status is to improve dramatically.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dan Johnson-Weinberger, interview by author, untaped, Los Angeles, 13 March 2001.

<sup>28</sup> John B. Anderson, "Prospects for a Third Party under Our Present Electoral System," *Long Term View* 2 no. 2 (1994): 32.

<sup>29</sup> Diana Dwyre and Robin Kolodny, "Barriers to Minor Party Success and Prospects for Change," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 182.

As New Mexico Green Party leader Carol Miller has said, "All third parties help get us to a multiparty system. They invigorate independence in the electorate and encourage new candidates."<sup>30</sup> Since parties can maintain their ballot presence by performance in 47 states, building from a current third party is an attractive opportunity.<sup>31</sup>

As noted earlier, many of the constraints on third parties are perpetuated by the parties themselves. Since defective organization and intra-party fights have been keys to instability, improvements in party structure could help them succeed. An independent political movement could be structured in several different ways. A third party could endorse major party candidates or threaten to run candidates in races where no major party candidate was attentive to the third party's concerns. Alternatively, an independent political movement could be temporary, creating either a replacement party or a major party more attentive to the third party's concerns. The party could also join with others to pursue structural reforms that allowed for multiple parties such as public financing, proportional representation, fusion, and ballot access reform.<sup>32</sup>

According to Tony Mazzocchi, most parties skip over the difficult step of initial organizing and fail to have adequate discussion among their own membership.<sup>33</sup> Lowi

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<sup>30</sup> Carol Miller, "Strategy Problems for Third Parties," Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>31</sup> The Appleseed Center for Electoral Reform and the Harvard Legislative Research Bureau, "Statute: A Model Act for the Democratization of Ballot Access," *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 36 (Summer 1999): 470.

<sup>32</sup> David Reynolds, *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), xi.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Mazzocchi, "Can Third Parties Transform the Two-Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

believes that successful new parties must be built by grassroots activists at the state and local level, where major parties often fail to field candidates. Second, Lowi says, minor parties must have the goal of influencing the political debate rather than being elected to power. Third, they must recruit a core group of activists.<sup>34</sup> John Green and William Binning argue that the Reform Party followed none of these lessons, focusing on the presidency, claiming that they would be a governing party, and not developing an activist core.<sup>35</sup>

The American minor parties that have been successful in the past century were breakaway movements from the major parties, but internationally new naturally formed parties have been the most successful recent additions to party systems.<sup>36</sup> Because third parties are unable to sustain themselves unless they offer benefits to those who support their cause, these naturally formed parties are less likely to be successful in the U.S. As six-time Socialist Party candidate for president Norman Thomas said, "no third party has ever grown like an oak from an acorn."<sup>37</sup>

### *A Party of the Center*

The Reform Party grew out of the strong support in the electorate for a party of the center. Data from Black and Black's 1992 polling show that the potential core membership of a third party focusing on institutional reforms was equal to the strong

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<sup>34</sup> Green and Binning, 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Harmel, "The Impact of New Parties on Party Systems: Lessons for America from European Multiparty Systems," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 55.

<sup>37</sup> Bryce, 10.

partisans in the Republican and Democratic parties.<sup>38</sup> Edward Kearny and Robert Heineman have theorized that if either or both of the major two parties was captured by an "ideologically polarizing candidate," a centrist third party could arise to realign the party system."<sup>39</sup>

Perot could have made it clear that he was laying the groundwork for a third major party and asked a public hungry for new options to support his campaign. However, the Perot campaign was unable to present itself as a viable long-term vote for the end of the two-party system.<sup>40</sup> Perot's movement did not work to develop a core of local activists despite all the talk about "the volunteers;" it did not run any local candidates. Perot only presented himself as a man with a slim possibility of governing immediately; he did not emphasize that his campaign was a method of influencing policy choices by those already in power.

Perot did not convince any legislative candidates to run alongside him and did not build on independent third parties that had already been developed in the states. Following a pattern developed at General Motors, Perot desired total control over his campaign and was accused of micromanaging campaign volunteers from the Texas headquarters. Had Perot worked with political independents across the U.S. and made it clear that he was engaged in party-building efforts and a protest movement against the major parties, he would have been more successful.

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<sup>38</sup> Black and Black, 186.

<sup>39</sup> Edward N. Kearny and Robert A. Heineman, "Scenario for a Centrist Revolt: Third Party Prospects in a Time of Ideological Polarization," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 22 no. 1 (1992): 107-118.

<sup>40</sup> Green and Binning, 90.

With the Reform Party now controlled by Pat Buchanan and lacking any resources, it is quite doubtful that a centrist party can rise to prominence in American politics. The Natural Law Party offers a relatively mainstream message that could appeal to the center but lacks resources, is marginalized by the press, and suffers from its association to Transcendental Meditation.

### *The Green Party*

Having seen that the green movement is the most viable source of recent third-party development in Europe, the U.S. Green Party seems to hold the potential for influence. The Green Party had a long "pre-electoral stage" for building a core of activists and making connections between various local groups.<sup>41</sup> However, it used Ralph Nader to gain visibility, and whether it remains a locally-based party remains to be seen. Ralph Nader drew 2.7 percent of the vote, the third best third-party candidate vote (not including independents) since 1925; he also gained more votes than any Norman Thomas campaign and more than Henry Wallace.<sup>42</sup> The Nader campaign was effective in generating grassroots support, garnering more than 10,000 people to attend rallies that cost \$7 compared to free Bush and Gore rallies that probably never attracted crowds that large.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Greg Jan, "The Green Party: Global Politics at the Grassroots," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 156.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Winger, "Green Party Showings," *Ballot Access News* 16 no. 8 (2001). Available: <<http://www.ballot-access.org/2000/1116.html>>. Accessed 3 March 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, "Can Third Parties Transform the Two-Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

From that performance, which many credit with costing Gore the election, it is unclear where the Greens or Nader will go. Nader was unable to obtain the 5 percent threshold to receive public funding in the next election. He may run again in 2004 or support congressional candidates in the midterm elections but third party candidates typically falter in their second attempt at the Presidency. The party recognizes that without electoral reform, they will be unlikely to succeed; its activists will be a part of the reform movement.

### *The Libertarian Party*

The most active current third party is the Libertarians. In 2000, the Libertarian Party became the first third party in 80 years to contest a majority of U.S. House seats and the first to ever surpass one million votes for the U.S. House, receiving 1,660,000 votes or 1.84 percent.<sup>44</sup> According to Chairman Steve Dasbach, third parties should concentrate on building a base of candidates, funding, and volunteers. He has been doing just that for the Libertarians, contesting 256 House races, and raising \$4 million.<sup>45</sup>

The Libertarian Party, however, has been divided between "purists" and "pragmatists" and has particular trouble due to an anti-government ideology that turns off the vast majority of the country despite a populace that is basically socially liberal and

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Winger, "Libertarian Party Showings," *Ballot Access News* 16 no. 8 (2001). Available: <<http://www.ballot-access.org/2000/1116.html>>. Accessed 3 March 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Steve Dasbach, "Strategy Problems for Third Parties." Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.



economically conservative.<sup>46</sup> The third party has had only one nationally prominent candidate, the current Republican congressman Ron Paul.

### *New York's Fusion Parties*

The fusion parties are another potential source of a prominent third party. New York's new Working Families Party has support from organized labor and community groups and maintains a paid staff and a paid membership of 4,000. Both Green candidates and Democratic candidates have been given the party's ballot line.<sup>47</sup> New York's fusion parties, however, never seem to elect anyone who is not identified as a major party candidate and thus are little different from interest groups. The surge of the New York Conservatives was only central when the race question was in full play nationally.<sup>48</sup> Some claim that the Liberal and Conservative Party are responsible for candidate victories 4 percent and 12 percent of the time respectively; this assumes, however, that all minor party voters would otherwise not have voted for the major party candidate.<sup>49</sup>

### *Third-Party Advocacy of Electoral Reform*

If none of the current third parties has the potential to create a multiparty system through a rise to power, an electoral reform movement will still likely be helped by

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<sup>46</sup> Terry Savage, "The Libertarian Party: A Pragmatic Approach to Party Building," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 142.

<sup>47</sup> Micah Sifry, "A Working Third Party: Multiracial and Populist, New York's Working Families Party is Gaining Ground," *The Nation*, 271, no. 14 (2000): 15.

<sup>48</sup> James Gray Pope, "Fusion, Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party, and the Future of Third Parties in the United States," *Rutgers Law Review* 50 (Winter 1998): 492.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

activists from third parties. Ensuring that current third-party challengers are advancing the electoral reform agenda allows the parties to play an important role.

Not all third parties, however, even endorse the reforms that would be necessary for their own success. The Libertarian Party endorses getting rid of the Australian ballot, providing a binding none-of-the-above option on the ballot, and repealing FECA. Libertarian Party Chairman Steve Dasbach said that the party has not endorsed proportional representation because they need 75 percent membership support to pass such a resolution and they have only around 60 percent support within the party.<sup>50</sup> The Reform Party endorses ballot access reform, campaign finance reform, free media access, term limits, and fair debates but does not take a position on proportional representation or IRV. The Constitution Party endorses FECA repeal and counting votes manually but is likely to oppose any reform of the electoral system that is not already specified in the Constitution.

Several of the parties do present well-crafted agendas. The Natural Law Party platform includes a comprehensive plan to create a multiparty system. They support ballot access laws that are the same for every party, publicly sponsored television infomercials, debates, and campaign mailings for all ballot qualified candidates, same-day or automatic voter registration, abolition of the Electoral College, a national initiative process, proportional representation, and elimination of PACs and soft money.<sup>51</sup> The Green Party National Convention Platform advocates proportional representation (including choice voting, mixed member systems, party list systems, or cumulative voting

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<sup>50</sup> Dasbach.

<sup>51</sup> Natural Law Party, *Platform: Strengthening Democracy* (Fairfield, IA: Natural Law Party, 2000). Available: <<http://www.natural-law.org/platform/democracyP.html>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

systems), IRV, abolition of the Electoral College, the national initiative, ballot access reform, universal voter registration, free television and postage, banning PACs and soft money, and public financing.<sup>52</sup> It is the most comprehensive of the party platforms for electoral reform and specifically advocates "multi-party democracy."<sup>53</sup>

### **Building from the Ground Up**

Given positive electoral laws in a particular locality, third parties would be more likely to become viable. Local electoral reform campaigns, therefore, could help build support for national reform and pave the way for regional third parties that could help create a national multiparty system. Many of the Progressive reformers acted at the municipal level and many city governments were taken over by Progressive leaders. Progressives built up power in localities and used it to challenge state government.<sup>54</sup> Reform movements were successful when they had charismatic local leaders pursuing an agenda that was in tune with local needs.<sup>55</sup> The Progressives originated the use of states as what Ekirch called "laboratories of reform," trying different strategies and then applying them across the nation.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Association of State Green Parties, *Green Party Platform* (Denver, CO: Green Party National Convention, 2000). Available: <<http://www.gp.org/platform/gpp2000.html#reform>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ekirch, 106.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 266.

<sup>56</sup> Ekirch, 106.

According to Minnesota Independence Party Chairman Dean Barkley, the lesson of the Reform Party failure is that you cannot build a national party without slowly building a movement in many localities: "It was only really a party in four states," he points out.<sup>57</sup> According to Barkley, a new fiscally responsible, socially liberal, and reformist party can be built from strong bases in Minnesota and New York.<sup>58</sup> Even if nationwide efforts to create a multiparty system are stifled by legislative impediments, third-party activists could concentrate their efforts on the more lenient localities. As noted earlier, for example, fusion candidacies increased in the few places where they were still permitted in the midst of a nationwide crackdown through anti-fusion laws.

### *Local Electoral Reform*

As a starting point for the new movement, the push for replacement of punch-card voting systems in the aftermath of the 2000 election is likely to be an agenda item in many localities. Since the punch-card systems are concentrated in poorer regions, they are likely to be challenged by local lawmakers as unfair.<sup>59</sup> The ACLU is challenging the constitutionality of the disparities in voting systems between regions in California.

In an even more promising move, the Berkeley City Council passed a resolution supporting IRV and calling on the city to lobby state legislatures and Members of Congress on the issue.<sup>60</sup> The Amarillo School District implemented cumulative voting

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<sup>57</sup> Dean Barkley, interview by author, untaped, New York, 14 October 2000.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> William Raspberry, "Post-Traumatic Suggestions," *Washington Post*, 1 January 2001, sec. A, p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Paula Lee, "Pressure Mounts for Electoral Reform," *Voice for Democracy: Newsletter of Californians for Proportional Representation*, January 2001, 3.

after MALDEF sued the district alleging minority vote dilution.<sup>61</sup> They wanted to replace at-large elections with single-member districts but compromised with cumulative voting. In Texas, 50 jurisdictions have begun to use cumulative voting.<sup>62</sup> The local movement is beginning to expand. Over 80 local districts have adopted some kind of alternative voting system in the 1990s.<sup>63</sup> These local initiatives are promising even if they do not set the stage for national reform because they could encourage local third-party creation.

At the local level, there is also an advantage to be gained from relying on historical precedent for alternate voting systems instead of starting from scratch. If a locality had previously relied on a proportional system the public relations advantage for activists is "monstrous," according to Johnson-Weinberger, who is leading the effort to return to cumulative voting to Illinois. "[The advantage of historical precedent] is huge. It can not be overstated," he said.<sup>64</sup>

The abolition of cumulative voting in Illinois was part of a cutback amendment that reduced the size of the state house in 1980.<sup>65</sup> The Illinois system was only abolished because cutback amendment organizers were able to convince the public that the proposal would save money and was a way to throw out "59 lousy politicians" by decreasing the

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<sup>61</sup> Steve Padilla, "Voters Electing New Ways to Cast Ballots," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 June 2000, sec. A1 p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Center for Voting and Democracy, *Addressing Common Concerns about Multi-seat House Districts for U.S. House Elections* (Takoma Park, MD: Center for Voting and Democracy, 2000). Available: <<http://www.fairvote.org/library/statutes/scvsa99/watffacts.htm>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson-Weinberger.

<sup>65</sup> Alisa Solomon, "Taking Back the Vote," *The Village Voice*, 22 November 2000. Available: <<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0047/solomon.shtml>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

size of the legislature.<sup>66</sup> According to reformers, the repeal of cumulative voting in Illinois has brought regionalism; the Republicans have been represented mostly outside Chicago and the Democrats have been represented mostly in the city.<sup>67</sup>

Illinois Citizens for Proportional Representation believe that their campaign to return to cumulative voting could help launch voting reform onto the national agenda:

The most powerful thing we can do for the next great political reform -- dumping our inherently exclusionary winner-take-all voting -- is to change a state. That will immediately launch cumulative voting into the national debate - just as much as term limits had been in the early 1990s, and now public financing is, thanks to Maine. Suddenly, challenging the voting system itself would be a mainstream thing to do, sparking effort in other states and localities.<sup>68</sup>

This advantage from historical precedent can be expanded to be used as an argument for reform all over the U.S., according to New Party leader Joel Rogers: "We must recover the lost history of alternative voting systems."<sup>69</sup>

### *Building Third Parties from the Ground Up*

The current electoral system also presents an advantage to building a multiparty system at the local level. Creating state-level third parties wherever there are opportunities because of electoral reform will allow those parties to gain representation nationally. As Kim and Ohn prove, regionally based parties are a major exception to Duverger's Law: "Where the smallest group is strategically concentrated, its share of

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<sup>66</sup> Padilla.

<sup>67</sup> Midwest Democracy Center, *Proposal to Put Cumulative Voting Back on the Ballot* (Chicago: Midwest Democracy Center, 2000). Available: <<http://www.prarienet.org/icpr/CV/proposal.html>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Joel Rogers, "Can Third Parties Transform the Two-Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

seats will be even greater than that of the largest group."<sup>70</sup> Kim and Ohn predict a two-party system only in countries with no regionalized social cleavage.

Most regional parties in the U.S., however, have remained wedded to one of the major parties. According to Gillespie, "Many of this century's most noteworthy non-national significant others have been what historian William Hesseltine called satellite parties--associations exercising local power while still revolving in the orbit' of one of the other of the two nationally acknowledged major parties."<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, regional parties have been more successful than most third parties in the U.S.; of the twentieth century House seats won by third parties, more the two thirds were won by regional parties; 23 percent were from short-lived parties, and only 9 percent were from "continuing doctrinal third parties."<sup>72</sup> The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party at its height, for example, was represented by over half of the state's congressional delegation, most of its statewide officeholders, and both senators.

### Coalitions

However the electoral reform movement is eventually pursued, it will likely rely on building coalitions among those currently left out of the two major parties. Roosevelt's Progressive convention drew from his Republican supporters as well as

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<sup>70</sup> Jae-On Kim and Mahn-Geum Ohn, "A Theory of Minor-Party Persistence: Election Rules, Social Cleavage, and the Number of Political Parties," *Social Forces* 70 no. 3 (1992): 581.

<sup>71</sup> J. David Gillespie, *Politics at the Periphery: Third Parties in Two-Party America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 239.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

farmers, socialists, union leaders, and women.<sup>73</sup> The Working Families Party started as a coalition between unions, community organizers, and the New Party in a gubernatorial candidate race; it gained ballot access and expanded as a result of the campaign.<sup>74</sup> According to Working Families Party leader Ilana Sumka, "Third parties need real roots with labor and minorities."<sup>75</sup> Coalitions are certainly necessary to establish prominent third parties. In particular, building consensus among those left behind by economic transition is often a necessary precondition for third-party success.

According to Paul Tsongas, however, it is impossible to gain support from all old left organizations and third party organizers do not need them to achieve success:

Some groups would see such a third party as too much of a leap of faith -- traditional labor unions... minority leaders who espouse victimization over empowerment... senior citizens... To win in America, however, you don't need everyone. You do need to appeal to people's common sense and their basic commitment to fairness and generational responsibility.<sup>76</sup>

Along these lines, there has been little or no outreach to progressive Republicans, including the term-limits movement and the supporters of John McCain. Tsongas envisions a coalition of fiscally responsible "good-government" conservatives, the young, and parents worried about passing on a better standard of living to their children.<sup>77</sup> He

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<sup>73</sup> David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left & Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 57.

<sup>74</sup> Tony Mazzocchi and Bob Masters, *Debating Fusion, Elections, Movement-Building, and More* (Bloomfield, NJ: Independent Politics Progressive Network, 1999). Available: <<http://www.ippn.org/Sept99/article4.htm>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Ilana Sumka, "Strategy Problems for Third Parties." Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Paul E. Tsongas, *Journey of Purpose: Reflections on the Presidency, Multiculturalism, and Third Parties*, The Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 108.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.



says that the movement could also reach out to gay activists, small businesspeople, and small farmers.

### *Civil Rights Coalitions*

This centrist movement is theorized by many independents but does not preclude reaching out to others left behind by the current system. Having seen that race, religion, and gender are the primary bases of social cleavages in the U.S., movements rooted in those identifications are likely to have stronger and more sustainable support. Lowi predicts a "representation crisis" under the current system because of the suppression of minorities of all kinds.<sup>78</sup> As noted earlier, the racial cleavage has grown stronger just as new ethnic groups have become major forces in the electorate. Racial coalitions should therefore be a source of activists for electoral reform.

This view is a continuation of a long tradition of independent advocacy in the civil rights movement. When the NAACP first arose, it argued that the black vote should be separate from either party's control. Blacks created the Lincoln Independent Party in protest of their marginalization within the Republican Party, beginning the trend away from Republican support.<sup>79</sup> Stokely Carmichael also organized a local independent party, saying that it was "as ludicrous for Negroes to join the Democratic Party as it would have been for Jews to join the Nazi Party."<sup>80</sup> Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both

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<sup>78</sup> Lowi, "What's Wrong with the Two Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>79</sup> Warren N. Holmes, *The National Black Independent Political Party: Political Insurgency or Ideological Convergence?* Studies in African American History and Culture, ed. Graham Russell Hodges (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 38.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

indicated that they had severe reservations about leaving the pursuit of the black agenda to the Democratic Party. King considered running for U.S. president as an independent with anti-war activist Dr. Benjamin Spock before being assassinated in 1968.<sup>81</sup>

Coalitions with independent blacks should be formed to sustain third parties and the electoral reform movement. In one alliance example, Minister Louis Farrakhan and Reverend Al Sharpton supported Lenora Fulani's third-party presidential candidacy along with gay and Latino activists. Coalitions between black parties and other activists can certainly work if blacks maintain a predominant degree of control over decision-making. The presidential campaigns of Ron Daniels and Lenora Fulani were both multi-racial but black-led.

These kinds of efforts seemed more successful than the Black Panther Party's early alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party.<sup>82</sup> Potential partnerships with other parties, however, also must be considered by ethnically-based parties. The New Party's membership is over one-third African-American and its leaders are actively courting independent black activists; its decentralized structure would even allow black parties to form locally and affiliate with a stronger coalition nationally.<sup>83</sup> In Wisconsin, the Rainbow Coalition decided to build a New Party alliance with the Farmer-Labor Party and the Greens; the group spends equal time promoting candidates and pursuing protest

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<sup>81</sup> Lenora Fulani, "Lenora Fulani," *Independent Black Leadership In America*, ed. William Pleasant (New York: Castillo International, 1990), 78.

<sup>82</sup> Holmes, 100.

<sup>83</sup> Reynolds, 190.

campaigns.<sup>84</sup> The Vermont chapter of the Rainbow Coalition provided a necessary base of support for the election of Independent Congressman Bernie Sanders.<sup>85</sup>

Sanders' establishment of the Progressive Caucus shows that once in office, independents can also build progressive alliances with major party legislators without losing their independence.<sup>86</sup> Even if alliances were not officially formed, black issues could be brought to the forefront of a broader independent political movement; merely mobilizing for multicultural education and popularizing leaders who talk openly about privilege and subordination might help advance the civil rights agenda.<sup>87</sup>

Proportional representation can certainly be advanced as part of a new civil rights agenda. There are more women and ethnic minorities in proportional representation systems. Differences in party selection of minority candidates between Britain and Germany shows that proportional representation increases minority power in political parties. The Japanese limited vote and other semi-proportional systems also offer minority representation. Proportional representation has increased the number of women and minority officeholders along with their vote totals in Malta, Ireland, Australia, and Nepal.

Majoritarian allowances for minority representation, such as racial gerrymandering, do not allow self-identification of minorities; within proportional representation systems, no significant minority group is missed or favored in the allocation of seats. Proportional representation would encourage independent minority

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 326.

mobilization because potential representation would provide an incentive for organized political efforts. Ethnicity is also major source of identification for potential candidates; minority candidates may be able to cause short-term increases in participation by members of their ethnic group, mobilizing support for an independent campaign.

### *Third Party Coalitions*

Coalitions of current third parties are also a possibility. Meetings of national third-party leaders took place after the election and the *New York Times* covered a meeting of Colorado third-party leaders that included a pledge to work together.<sup>88</sup> At the "Third Parties '96" summit, a diverse array of independent parties including the Libertarians, the Socialists, and the Greens signed onto a common ground declaration that shows that each party has much in common with other parties that have been left out of the political system. "Third Parties '96" also incorporated the Reform Party, the Natural Law Party, the Independent Politics Progressive Network (IPPN), and other independent advocates. Their common platform included calls for proportional representation, ballot access reform, ending the drug war, and cuts in military and corporate welfare expenditures.<sup>89</sup> IPPN has held several National Independent Politics Summits, bringing progressive third-party organizers together. The conferences included workshops on third-party alliances and electoral reform.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Richard Winger, "Ballot Access Bills Introduced in 9 States," *Ballot Access News* 16 no. 11 (2001). Available: <<http://www.ballot-access.org/2001/0201.html>>. Accessed 3 March 2001.

<sup>89</sup> Reynolds, 259.

<sup>90</sup> Ted Glick, *Unity in Diversity: The IPPN Model* (Bloomfield, NJ: Independent Politics Progressive Network, 1997). Available: <<http://www.ippn.org/OAGlick.htm>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

Third-party coalitions, however, face several obstacles. First, each of the major leftists parties relies on a different constituency: environmentalists, minorities, community organizations, and trade unions.<sup>91</sup> Second, there had been a debate on the left about the fusion strategy used by the New Party; in fact, the Greens generally opposed such an approach.<sup>92</sup> Third, the Libertarian Party, one of the largest third parties, will not enter coalitions with other third parties nationally.<sup>93</sup> Fourth, though radical right parties share remarkable symmetry with parties of the left, especially in style, attempts at left-right coalitions, such as that between Pat Buchanan and Lenora Fulani, have generally failed.<sup>94</sup>

Third-party coalitions for particular purposes, however, are still possible. Ideologically different third parties in Texas recently agreed not to run candidates in the same legislative district so as to maximize third-party support. New Zealand's example of "The Alliance" is instructive; the organization combined autonomous parties that ran a slate of candidates together and won support for implementing a proportional representation system that may allow each party to flourish individually in the future.<sup>95</sup>

The New Zealand Alliance is a model for minor party coalitions. The Alliance combined five political parties: the New Labour Party and the Liberal Party, breakaways from the two major parties, joined with the Green Party, a small business party called the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Lowi, "What's Wrong with the Two Party System?"

<sup>94</sup> Gillespie, 206.

<sup>95</sup> Reynolds, 262.

Democrats, and a workers party called the Mana Motuhake Party.<sup>96</sup> It thus combined parties with different ethnic and economic constituencies; the organization allowed each party to remain distinct and had equal representation on a governing body that operated by consensus.<sup>97</sup> The goals of the Alliance were set out in advance to prevent internal dissent but any two parties in the Alliance could stop any group action. All the parties ran only one candidate in each parliamentary district.

Two years after its founding in 1993, it won 18 percent of the vote and two seats in Parliament and, more importantly, helped adopt a mixed-member proportional representation system through a national referendum.<sup>98</sup> The Alliance is now part of the coalition government and has ten Members of Parliament. Even if the major third parties did not actually combine, coalitions would still be possible. Anti-fusion laws in some states, for example, failed to prevent the combined 1896 "Democrat-People's" party ticket in 1896.

These coalitions could support reform policies but would not necessarily be formed as political parties. According to Lani Guinier, however, "Over time, the best of these [electoral reform] permanent coalitions might begin to look a little bit like parties: presumably they would have broad platforms, sizable but loose constituencies, and candidates and elected officials allied to them."<sup>99</sup> This reform coalition would then

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<sup>96</sup> Curt Firestone, *The New Zealand Alliance* (Bloomfield, NJ: Independent Politics Progressive Network, 2001). Available: <<http://www.ippn.org/DCFirestone.htm>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Lani Guinier, "What We Must Overcome," *The American Prospect* 12, no. 5 (2001). Available: <<http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/pring/V12/5/guinier-l.html>>. Accessed 20 March 2001.

parallel the Progressive coalition, which began as a series of local reform efforts and, at certain times, coalesced into a broad party.

### **Social Movements**

Change of the magnitude suggested in this study is generally accomplished by both work inside political structures and a massive push from the outside. In the context of the profound social transformation discussed in Chapter Three, political protest must be a key component of any electoral reform movement. As Reynolds puts it, "progressive electoral efforts must maintain a sense of themselves as a mass movement, rather than merely a candidate-electing machine."<sup>100</sup> The effectiveness in changing societal values came when movements were connected to mass protests and group mobilization. The abolitionist and temperance movements required broad-based activism, for instance, not centralized groups.<sup>101</sup> Alternative political movements must therefore always maintain a grass-roots focus to force broad change.

Protest-based politics are typically at the heart of racial justice movements. The single greatest source of influence on government policy during the civil rights movement, for example, was the continuation of mass activist-police confrontations.<sup>102</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward recommend that new social movements should

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<sup>100</sup> Reynolds, 289.

<sup>101</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 52.

<sup>102</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 241.

work to "escalate the momentum and impact of disruptive protest."<sup>103</sup> The NAACP gained its court-granted civil rights concessions only "in a growing climate of black protest," Piven and Cloward point out; the mainstream organizations were thus benefiting from the outside strategy without being directly involved.<sup>104</sup>

Protest movements seem to occur under three conditions: first, institutions lose their legitimacy; second, institutional power is no longer considered an inherent feature of politics; and third, people believe they can change the system.<sup>105</sup> Because faith in government at all levels is at an all-time low, several of these conditions should have already been met. Success will only require convincing people that they have the power to alter the system. Successful independent campaigns and better awareness of potential electoral reforms are therefore key.

Economic changes, particularly rapid structural upheavals, have also been the source of most mass movements. The changes in the southern economy that led to the civil rights movement, for instance, were as profound as the movement from feudal plantations.<sup>106</sup> In particular, the "agricultural and industrial transformation" in the south was largely responsible. A "new period of mass defiance," Piven and Cloward predict, could be the result of any major "social and economic changes."<sup>107</sup> The coming of the third-wave information age economy combined with the increasing globalization of industry will probably meet this condition. A protest movement, however, will likely

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 258.



react to specific economic and political events. Electoral reform movements will have to be prepared to use times of crisis to advance the movement.

### *Minor Parties and Social Movements*

According to New Mexico Green Party leader Carol Miller, minor parties are more successful when they encourage direct action and social activities rather than continuous meetings.<sup>108</sup> According to Ron Walters, movement building is a necessary precursor to party building because every major change has been sparked by a social movement.<sup>109</sup> Ralph Nader's campaign included picket line visits and was based in part on movement-based politics.

The Labor Party was organized not only to eventually contest elections but also to build a movement for political reform. It has been organized to have equal representation by ethnicity and gender and include poor people's organizations.<sup>110</sup> According to Labor Party leader Tony Mazzocchi, "Working class consciousness has to be elevated and people need to think in class terms if we're going to bring about real change. Now that's an ambitious agenda, and we recognize that. We see this as a very long-term struggle."<sup>111</sup>

Activist devotion to new political organizations is more likely to expand rather than slow broader protest movements. A study of participants in the National Black Independent Political Party revealed that involvement in black political parties does not come at the expense of other movement activities. Participation in local civic groups by

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<sup>108</sup> Miller.

<sup>109</sup> Ron Walters, "Lifeblood of American Politics of Lock-Up of American Government? The Meaning of the Two Party System," Panel discussion at a conference entitled "The Two-Party System and Its Discontents." American University, Washington, DC, 13 May 1999.

<sup>110</sup> Mazzocchi and Masters.

party activists rose from 10 percent to 24 percent. Participation in organizational development rose from 5 percent to 14 percent. Involvement in independent black institutions such as schools rose from 5 percent to 19 percent. Finally, demonstration participation rose from 5 percent to 10 percent.<sup>112</sup>

### *The Civil Rights Movement*

The civil rights movement must play a key role in any successful electoral reform protest movement. According to historian Robert Brisbane, America has seen five major periods of black protest followed by lengthy periods of relative apathy: "the post-revolutionary protest" from 1795-1815, "the militant anti-slavery movement" from 1831-1850, "post-reconstruction" from 1876-1896, "the era of Marcus Garvey," from 1916-1933, and "the black revolution" from 1955-1970.<sup>113</sup>

Though mass movements have characterized the protest periods, the quiet periods have been dominated by institutionalized elitist structures. According to the historical pattern, a more independent black elite emerges near the end of the quiet period to challenge the institutionalized elite, anticipating the rise of the next mass movement.<sup>114</sup> After each mass movement, a new set of issues comes to dominate political discourse and new political routines are developed.<sup>115</sup> New movements take considerable time to arise,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Holmes, 64.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 6.

however, because over extended periods, younger voters with weak ties to the major parties replace older voters predisposed to traditional party support.<sup>116</sup>

Black America thus might be due for another mass movement. The formation of the National Black Independent Political Party and the 1980s campaigns of Jesse Jackson were part of the "necessary pre-movement stage" for the next round of racial political upheaval.<sup>117</sup> The movements typically require activists with ties to mass-based institutions such as unions, civic groups, and black churches.<sup>118</sup> In the last two decades, there has been a shift in mainstream black organizations toward nationalist objectives including Afro-centric curricula in public schools, African-American Studies programs on college campuses, and reparations.<sup>119</sup> African-American Studies programs have made major contributions to the black power movement and are replacing churches as the dominant civil rights institutions.<sup>120</sup>

There is also disenchantment with integration in the black populace; the new ethnic celebration is exhibited by the rise of "African-American" identity and birthday celebrations for Malcolm X.<sup>121</sup> Black activists from the current young generation are engaged in a new type of activism, demanding self-actualization instead of merely access to power.<sup>122</sup> Upheaval in American cities is also a precursor to the next civil rights movement. President Johnson's Kerner Commission reported that the 1967 urban riots

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 98.

were a product of the lack of black political power; the 1992 L.A. riots contribute to this thesis, as minority groups were responding to years of police repression.<sup>123</sup>

A race-conscious political reform movement must also take note of gender. As noted earlier, changes in gender roles are a major contributor to the condition of modern society. Both gendered perspectives and transgender movements are likely to create a serious societal debate over gender roles. Though mostly an intellectual movement, the increasing debate in feminism over whether the previous integrationist efforts served as an acquiescence to dominant patriarchal orders such as standardized employment may give rise to a new series of protests. The National Organization for Women has not only endorsed a third-party option, it also played a major role in organizing protests at the Bush inauguration over voting rights.

### *The Aftermath of the 2000 Election*

The opportunity to create a social movement from the events of the 2000 election is evident. The major successful reform movements of American history, after all, have relied on a reevaluation of how to live up to the ideals professed in the founding, not on creating an alternative philosophy. Progressivism, for example, relied on American individualism as a source of good against the paternalism of both modern business and government.<sup>124</sup> The Florida recount and the overrule of the popular vote by the Electoral College present an opportunity to show that the current electoral structures do not live up to the ideals of American democracy.

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<sup>122</sup> Reynolds, 234.

<sup>123</sup> Mary Inman, "Symposium: Comment: Change through Proportional Representation: Resuscitating a Federal Electoral System," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 141 (May 1993): 2020.

<sup>124</sup> Hofstadter, 225.

Decentralized efforts with mass grassroots support are mobilizing after the Florida recount but it is unclear how long they will stay active.<sup>125</sup> As *Village Voice* writer Alisa Solomon put it, "[Demonstrations] have turned the Florida fiasco into a public debate on the depth of American democracy."<sup>126</sup> Even the Supreme Court decision could serve as a wake up call for electoral reform activists, according to Lani Guinier: "Excoriated at the time for deciding an election, the Court majority's stout reading of equal protection is an invitation not just to future litigation but to a citizens' movement for genuine participatory democracy."<sup>127</sup> Jesse Jackson, for his part, indicated that the decision would prompt mass protest.

The combined set of events at least presents the possibility for a new social movement. As Miles Rapoport has said, "For some this debate will focus narrowly on improving election equipment and modernizing election administration... But for progressives, this is a moment to expand the debate into one about making democracy as inclusive and vibrant as possible."<sup>128</sup> Rapoport explains that electoral reform issues have been absent from the left's agenda until recently: "Until last November, the progressive community was ambivalent about democracy issues, which often were dismissed as mere process or 'good-government' concerns."<sup>129</sup> According to Solomon, the political

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<sup>125</sup> Solomon.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Guinier.

<sup>128</sup> Miles S. Rapoport, "Democracy's Moment," *The American Prospect* 12, no. 4 (2001). Available: <<http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/pring/V12/5/rapoport-m.html>>. Accessed 20 March 2001.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

environment has now changed; the biggest electoral reform push after the 2000 election will be for IRV.<sup>130</sup>

A "Million Voter March" is being organized by some of the groups behind the inauguration protests. Independent leaders associated with John Hagelin's campaign for president, including Jesse Ventura campaign manager Dean Barkley, former Reform Party Secretary Jim Mangia, and former Presidential candidate Lenora Fulani issued a call after the 2000 election for a "Million Independents March."<sup>131</sup> If such an event could take place with major speakers like Ross Perot, Ralph Nader, and Jesse Ventura, it could raise public awareness about electoral reform issues. According to the "Million Independents March" organizers, "There must be a coming together of independents across the ideological divide - from the center, left and right."<sup>132</sup>

Former third-party presidential candidate Ron Daniels, of the Center for Constitutional Rights, has organized a Pro-Democracy Convention scheduled for June 28 through July 1 in Philadelphia. The convention has the support of the Center for Voting and Democracy, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Independent Progressive Politics Network, the Institute for Policy Studies, the NAACP, the National Action Network, Public Campaign, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The diverse groups involved in the movement are a testament to the coalition-building power of the 2000 election. The events of the Florida recount could serve to unite whites with minorities in an electoral reform movement, according to Lani Guinier:

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<sup>130</sup> Solomon.

<sup>131</sup> Natural Law Party, "News Flash: Leaders of Independent Politics Appeal for Unified Movement," 5 February 2001. Available: <[http://www.natural-law.org/news/news\\_flash/2001\\_02\\_05.html](http://www.natural-law.org/news/news_flash/2001_02_05.html)>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

"Hope is on the way when whites in this country begin to realize that they are also disenfranchised and start examining more closely the experience of Blacks, Latinos, and other people of color to see how these problems, which often converge around visible minorities, actually affect us all."<sup>133</sup>

Guinier points out that a united movement must include a broad-based effort to challenge the current electoral system:

But while black anger could fuel a citizens' movement or a new, European-style political party that seeks reforms beyond the mechanics of election day voting, the danger is that whites will be suspicious of the struggle if they perceive that its aim is simply to redress wrongs done to identifiable victims or to serve only the interest of people of color... A pro-democracy movement would need to build on the experience of Florida to show how problems with disenfranchisement based on race and status signify systemic issues of citizen participation. Such mobilization would seek to recapture the passion in evidence immediately after the election.<sup>134</sup>

Rapoport recommends a decentralized movement with lawyers, public interest groups, and social movements working in tandem with different methods: "We need, in sum, a movement that has diverse approaches but an underlying unity of purpose. Different organizations can do very different things."<sup>135</sup>

Young people will be a major source of such a movement. Having shown that social groups have a choice between creating protest parties, creating long-term parties, or staying out of the process, younger independents that currently choose not to vote in large numbers must be shown that an activist alternative is a reasonable path. Students, who comprise one of the largest social groups of our time, actually represent the largest

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<sup>133</sup> Lani Guinier quoted in Alisa Solomon, "Taking Back the Vote," *The Village Voice*, 22 November 2000. Available: <<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0047/solomon.shtml>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Rapoport.

potential source of political pressure in an era that lacks the farmers that were central to Populist and Progressive politics. If young people show that they are not apathetic and not complicit with governing institutions that render their participation meaningless, they can become an important component of a broad social movement. IPPN has proposed a "Democracy Summer" that would train young activists to fight for electoral reform.

### *The Anti-Globalization Movement*

An electoral reform movement should not work in isolation from the more general social movement against the global power of multinational corporations. As noted earlier, corporate domination is seen by many as a modern epidemic that can produce a resistance movement like that encouraged by the gilded age. The Progressive movement was against the concentration of power in corporations instead of small business and individuals; the main complaint was that corporations controlled the political system.<sup>136</sup> The Progressives attacked business structures, in particular the authoritarian and closed nature of modern bureaucracies and the threat of larger mergers to come.<sup>137</sup>

Business consolidation was the key issue Roosevelt used in 1912, with a focus on the anti-trust movement. The large aggregations in government, industry, and unions were all a source of Progressive discontent; the movement created an alternative to these corporate organizations arising on both the left and the right.<sup>138</sup> Progressivism also relied on small business leaders who could not compete with industrial organizations.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Horowitz, 51.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 217.



According to Piven, the rise of business politics followed the decline of protest movements and only a re-emergence of protest movements can stop corporate ascendancy.<sup>140</sup> Even if modern anti-trust struggles like that over Microsoft do not approach the level of public consciousness of the great campaigns of that time, corporate power is still a key issue. 72 percent of Americans believe that large corporations have too much power over all aspects of their lives.<sup>141</sup>

Nader tried to take advantage of the rising resistance to corporate ascendancy but, according to Robert Borosage, his effort is not as important as the broader social movement: "What's important about this moment is Seattle, the anti-globalization movement, not the parties."<sup>142</sup> The protest movement has organized the largest mass direct actions in recent years, including demonstrations at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle in November 1999, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings in Washington in April 2000, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec City in April 2001.

The movement is already intimately connected with an attack on the American political system. Many of the same groups organized protests at both major party conventions, the presidential debates, and the inauguration. Though the protests discussed an array of issues, the sheer presence of many of the same protesters in Philadelphia and Los Angeles sent a message to the two-party system. "Billionaires for

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<sup>140</sup> Frances Fox Piven, "What's Wrong with the Two Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>141</sup> Ralph Nader, "Keynote." Speech at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." Hunter College Auditorium, New York, 7 October 2000.

Bush or Gore," a parade of activists with briefcases, was a particularly effective critique of the two-party system.

According to IPPN, all the protests had a similar focus: "There are two, overarching themes behind both the mass direct actions of the past year and a number of the major, on-going national movements and campaigns: challenging the overwhelming power of the corporate rulers and striving to enact democratic reforms."<sup>143</sup> Naomi Klein believes that resistance movements need to come together in parallel with corporate consolidation: "We need mergers of our own," she says.<sup>144</sup> According to Seattle protest organizer Michael Dolan, it is better to pursue change with the independent affinity group model: "A consolidation of the meta-movement just creates a bigger target for the media and corporate elite."<sup>145</sup> A protest movement that offers a general critique of the American political system through multiple kinds of resistance seems the most appropriate.

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<sup>142</sup> Robert Borosage, "Can Third Parties Transform the Two-Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>143</sup> Independent Politics Progressive Network, *On the Need for a Post-2000, Pro-Democracy Campaign* (Bloomfield, NJ: Independent Politics Progressive Network, 2000). Available: <<http://www.ippn.org/Pro-Democracy.htm>>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

<sup>144</sup> Naomi Klein, "Can Movement and Party Challengers Work Together?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

<sup>145</sup> Michael Dolan, "Can Movement and Party Challengers Work Together?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

### The Viral Spread of Change

If political change was created only by a gradual building of support for new ideas, multiparty system advocates would not be positioned well. Few people are currently knowledgeable about electoral reform and convincing new supporters at the current level of advocacy would be quite difficult. Change, however, does not need to be slow and arduous. Malcolm Gladwell has recently shown that in the economic and political spheres, messages and ideas spread in the model of the virus, from contagious behavior.<sup>146</sup>

If a small group begins behaving differently, the behavior can spread, typically in one dramatic moment.<sup>147</sup> According to Gladwell, radical change is not only possible but certain, given the way ideas spread once over "the tipping point."<sup>148</sup> Once movements reach a certain point, they are likely to gain mainstream acceptance in a very short time. The spread of religious movements, for instance, gets started through organizational networks and supportive communities.<sup>149</sup> Rather than building gradually towards a majority viewpoint, change in public opinion will come very quickly after a long period of build-up by a group of activists making the right connections. A broad-based movement toward a multiparty system, therefore, may be a slow and complex process but it will not require a linear shift in public opinion. It will only require reaching a saturation point by convincing well-connected people to join the movement.

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<sup>146</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 7.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 173.

Word of mouth is still the most effective way to transfer ideas. Stanley Milgram's proof of six degrees of separation showed that a few important people actually connect everyone together.<sup>150</sup> According to Gladwell, "connectors" combine "salesmen," who know how to persuade, to insure that epidemic changes occur.<sup>151</sup> Gladwell's theory of stickiness shows that the salesmen are a crucial element: "There is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible."<sup>152</sup>

Ideas are often the catalyst for change, Gladwell says: "What must underlie successful epidemics, in the end, is a bedrock belief that change is possible, that people can radically transform their behavior or beliefs in the face of the right kind of impetus."<sup>153</sup> The Dalai Lama agrees: "If we look at the evolution of human society, we see the necessity of having vision in order to bring about positive change. Ideas are the engine of progress."<sup>154</sup> As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."<sup>155</sup>

Movements require innovators and early adopters but can spread quickly after reaching a tipping point.<sup>156</sup> Pack journalism fits nicely with the theory, because it shows how ideas can become conventional wisdom quickly given the right circumstances. The

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>154</sup> The Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 197.

<sup>155</sup> Margaret Mead quoted in Dan Feserman, "Amid prosperity, concern for poor Well-being," *Baltimore Sun*, 16 July 2000, sec. A, p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Gladwell, 197.

theory of the viral spread of change shows that small groups can create mass change by brainstorming effective strategies and proposals.

In *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell also shows that by changing the environmental context of events, an epidemic can start quickly. From the broken windows theory of crime to the Zimbardo experiment, science has shown that changing details of context can alter behavior to drastically change the course of events.<sup>157</sup> Creating conditions that make people perceive that change is possible can have profound effects. Small changes in electoral law will therefore have a substantial impact on elite choices regarding third-party support. Reform could increase the number third-party candidates, garner better media coverage, or gain interest group support by making it a little easier for third-party candidates to be successful.

The proliferation of communication networks, the ease with which people can start small groups and spread ideas, and the prominence of word-of-mouth can help move the viral process along quite quickly. Multiparty system activists that are aware of how change happens can use traditional resources, such as advocates and convincing messages, along with new technology to make reform possible.

### **An Ideology of Reform**

A successful electoral reform movement would most likely need to develop a coherent ideology to challenge the ideology of the major parties. Having shown that many issues are not included in the debate between the major parties and that even when issues are included, the diversity of positions presented is quite low, it would serve

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 156.

multiparty system advocates well to point out the inadequacies of the current political debate.

Lack of salient issues was a major complaint voiced about Perot that is often extended to other third-party candidates. Issue alienation is a strong predictor of third-party voting; those who look at candidate issue positions are more likely to vote for a third party, especially in times of crisis.<sup>158</sup> Tapping into this constituency is important, according to Howard Gold, because modern factors can work with responsive agendas to produce third-party voting:

The aging of a party system, the emergence of candidate-centered politics, or an influx of new voters may all contribute to a decline of partisanship in the population. And this decline interacts with specific factors such as economic discontent or issue alienation to lay the groundwork for third-party success.<sup>159</sup>

Anderson differentiated himself from Republicans with a pro-choice stand and support for gun control and the Equal Rights Amendment, but those who voted for him did not necessarily share his views.<sup>160</sup> Wallace, in contrast, was able to build an ideologically cohesive block of young independents with positions on segregation and federal expansion. Wallace did not fit typical political categorization; he was called everything from a progressive to a traditionalist to a populist.

The two major parties have historically differed along the cleavage of modernization but currently lack much of a difference in perspective on issues related to technological progress. This is a potential opening for a new progressive movement. Whereas populism grew out of a nostalgic agrarian vision that could not compete with the

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<sup>158</sup> Howard Gold, "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace," *Political Research Quarterly* 48 no. 3 (1995): 752.

<sup>159</sup> Gold, 754.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 755.

nature of the industrial revolution, Progressivism created a new agenda in concert with the changes of the time.<sup>161</sup> This is a process that could be repeated in the information age context. This agenda does not necessarily need to be fully developed as a policy platform. As Richard Hofstadter has pointed out, "[Progressivism] was, to be sure, a rather vague and not altogether cohesive or consistent movement, but this was probably the secret of its considerable successes, as well as of its failures."<sup>162</sup>

### *Social Issues*

Having noted that social conservatism is often co-opted by major party rhetoric but rarely practiced by policymakers despite a prominent group of the electorate that is focused on non-economic issues, social issues could also be the basis of a reform movement. Contemporary social conservatives could follow the model of evangelical leaders in American cities who spread Progressive ideas to their church memberships.<sup>163</sup> According to Free Congress Foundation spokesman Bill Lynd, the cultural conservatives also feel unrepresented by the major parties and want to work toward a change from economic to cultural politics.<sup>164</sup> The Free Congress Foundation has even supported efforts to add a binding "none of the above" option to the ballot.

Intellectual leaders did endorse Progressive ideology, but it was the social gospel movement and muckraking journalism that was key to popular endorsement of

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<sup>161</sup> Ekirch, 39.

<sup>162</sup> Hofstadter, 5.

<sup>163</sup> Ekirch, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Bill Lynd, "Are There Viable Alternatives to the Status Quo?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "The Two-Party System and Its Discontents." American University, Washington, DC, 13 May 1999.

Progressive ideas.<sup>165</sup> Hofstadter points out that a social downturn, not an economic crisis, gave rise to the Progressive movement:

People readily acknowledged that in spite of all [their complaints] they were prosperous. But many of them could not help feeling that this prosperity was being obtained on false pretenses, that it was theirs in disregard of sound and ancient principles, and that for this disregard they would in good time come to grief.<sup>166</sup>

It was not loss of power or prosperity, but the degradation of the soul, that gave birth to the movement. The Populist and Progressive movements shared a focus on challenging power centers in business and government but the critique was based largely on traditional values.

### *A Progressive Agenda*

Even if the electoral reform movement did not emphasize social issues, it would need to develop an overall progressive ideology for modern problems. Modern independent campaigns have continued a connection to the progressive consciousness of the past. Perot, for example, was liked by historically progressive groups in small towns and in the west; he did quite well in every county that supported both Roosevelt and LaFollette.<sup>167</sup> Developing an agenda of institutional reforms to reinvigorate democracy could be a starting point for formulating a progressive campaign for the beginning of the twenty-first century. The approach represented by the campaign would be consistent with the political reform that is being demanded by a new generation of voters.

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<sup>165</sup> Ekirch, 50.

<sup>166</sup> Hofstadter, 222.

<sup>167</sup> Albert Menendez, *The Perot Voters & The Future of American Politics* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 43.



Progressivism grew from what would today be termed "the radical center." It was advanced primarily by "good-government" Republicans as a response to both business power and the proposed socialism.<sup>168</sup> An ideology of reform could be created to appeal to that section of the modern electorate. Paul Tsongas said that most Americans are socially liberal, economically conservative, and in favor of political reform. He termed this coalition the "passionate center."<sup>169</sup> According to Hofstadter, advocacy of reform for its own sake was enough to capture the imagination of the progressive electorate: "[The new middle class citizen] needed a feeling that action was taking place, a sense that the moral tone of things was being improved and that he had a part in this improvement."<sup>170</sup> The Progressives were able to develop both a larger program of reform and greater popular support than either the Populists or the Socialists by relying on this constituency.<sup>171</sup>

Three modern political crises could propel a reform movement by producing ideas that parallel the reforms advocated by the Progressives. First, the call for direct election of the president after the 2000 election could serve the same purpose that the populist call for popular election of senators served for the Progressives. Second, the impeachment of Bill Clinton could be used to show that a two-party system is incompatible with a fair method of checking presidential power. Though impeachment is rare, it is often

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<sup>168</sup> Hofstadter, 238.

<sup>169</sup> Tsongas, 90.

<sup>170</sup> Hofstadter, 212.

<sup>171</sup> Ekirch, 34.

proposed, most commonly to gain partisan advantage.<sup>172</sup> A national recall could be advocated as a more popular alternative to impeachment. Third, as redistricting fights shape up in every state following the 2000 census, the call for proportional representation could be at the center of a new progressive agenda.

There would be a core of support for a party or movement based on process reforms and several institutional changes could form a platform with wide public support. A national initiative and referendum process has 80 percent to 90 percent support, various campaign finance reform proposals have over 70 percent support, and support for term limits approaches 80 percent.<sup>173</sup> Jesse Ventura's advocacy of a unicameral legislature in Minnesota could serve as an example of institutional reform proposals by third parties. This type of reform could be advocated in other states or on a national level.

Reformers would, of course, need to advocate the reforms discussed earlier that would promote multiparty democracy. Combining the issues with a larger progressive agenda might help achieve group consciousness among reformers and provide the basis for either a party, an independent campaign, or a wide-ranging movement for electoral reform.

### **Convincing the Public**

Even if reforms to create multiparty democracy are advanced as part of a larger institutional reform movement, pursuing change will require convincing the public that a

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<sup>172</sup> Christopher Allen, *The Case for a Multi-party U.S. Parliament? American Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Athens: University of Georgia Department of Political Science, 2000). Available: <<http://www.arches.uga.edu/~csallen/parl.htm>>. Accessed 28 February 2001.

<sup>173</sup> Black and Black, 202-213.

multiparty system is desirable. In America, public opinion has a tremendous effect on chances of success in any political endeavor and calling for institutional reforms will require strong public support.

Millions of Americans are already convinced and waiting to be shown a way out of the two-party system. Independent identification has risen for over 30 years and hardly any Americans continue to vote straight-party tickets. The progressive movement, according to Hofstadter, was a response to the same loss of political power that currently concerns many Americans: "At bottom, the central fear was fear of power, and the greater the strength of an organized interest, the greater the anxiety it aroused."<sup>174</sup> This parallels modern concerns about the "special interests" controlling Washington. A new progressive movement could be pursued using much of the "outsider" rhetoric used in contemporary politics. A progressive movement would also be organized with the purpose of increasing voter participation and restoring faith in American democracy.

#### *Advocating Electoral System Reform*

The main argument for electoral reform should be that it would fix a broken political system. According to Black and Black, it would not be difficult to convince Americans that the system is broken:

In the midst of the Great Depression, almost three times as many people thought that Congress was as good a representative body as possible, as opposed to thinking that members of Congress basically cared only about their own political futures. In contrast, when the exact same question was asked more than 50 years later, the ratio was almost perfectly reversed.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Hofstadter, 241.

<sup>175</sup> Black and Black, 104.

The unrepresentative picture of Congress should be combined with an argument about the lack of real power associated with the vote in most Congressional districts. Few choices are left to voters in a plurality system; most legislative elections take place in "safe districts" and can reasonably be called "no-choice" elections. Multiparty system advocates can point out that 90 percent of state legislative and congressional races offer no choice either because of safe seats or lack of any competition, a rate of incumbency protection that rivals that of the height of the Soviet Union's single party system.<sup>176</sup> As Black and Black put it, "America is, in most places, really a one-party system dominated by two national party organizations operating in entirely separate districts."<sup>177</sup> In addition, incumbents use redistricting powers to draw district lines, a process amounting to legislators choosing their constituents.

Multiparty system advocates can argue that in alternative voting systems, the situation is either practically or formally more participatory. The electoral reform movement should follow the old adage "think global, act local." Examples from abroad can serve as powerful empirical models since most countries have already switched to proportional representation electoral systems. 19 out of 20 voters helped elect a representative in the last German election, reformers could point out. The international consensus on electoral systems could provide a powerful indictment for use in domestic politics. From 1993-1994, New Zealand, Japan, Russia, Mexico, and South Africa switched toward more proportional electoral systems.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>178</sup> Steven Hill, *Standing on the Threshold of a Third Party Dream* (Takoma Park, MD: Center for Voting and Democracy, 1995). Available: <[http://www.fairvote.org/library/third\\_parties/dream.htm](http://www.fairvote.org/library/third_parties/dream.htm)>. Accessed 1 March 2001.

Activists could also point out that adopting proportional representation would undermine the "culture of negative campaigning" because multiple candidates would be elected from each district and the number of candidates in each race would rise considerably. Candidates would have no incentive to engage in mudslinging, particularly if it could lower their ranking with some voters. The reformers' message should be that if a diversity of ideologies was presented, each party or individual would be forced to produce a comprehensive agenda distinguishing itself from others.

It may not be in the best interest of electoral reform advocates, however, to explicitly say that they are advocating a multiparty system. John Anderson has said that he has reached out to third parties but that arguments unrelated to multiparty systems may work better as public relations tools because major party support is needed.<sup>179</sup> Activists could argue that any minor reform would not produce a multiparty system because of the many constraints on third-party success. For some specific reforms, it may be better to focus on other arguments. In particular, the argument that IRV is more majoritarian than the current system will help ground it in the mainstream American value of majority rule.

### *Advocating Multiparty Democracy*

Admitting that a multiparty system is a goal and convincing the public that it is an attractive option, however, is a more realistic long-term path to change. Activists could argue that the two-party system stifles the diversity of society's political debate. Candidates are driven to the "middle" of the political spectrum and target only a small section of the electorate. Progressives, libertarians, social conservatives, liberals, and those with a single-issue focus are currently left on the margins of the political debate.

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<sup>179</sup> John Anderson, interview by author, untaped, New York, 14 October 2000.

Third parties are literally excluded from debates and not even given an opportunity to convince voters to support their ideas.

The two-party system, it could be argued, encourages candidates to make bipolar distinctions instead of advocating a unique program for support. As a result, the vast majority of ideological voices are silenced and important ideas are left out of the range of political opinion. The need to vote tactically, activists might point out, encourages the news media to adopt a "horse-race" approach to coverage; people want to be sure that they are voting for a viable candidate and so the issues become secondary.

A multiparty democracy can be promoted as a "new kind of political conversation." If set free and encouraged, advocates could point out, the diversity of political thought in a large and educated population would be extraordinary. New perspectives would be included in the political debate and more people would be given a reason to participate in politics.

### *Answering Criticisms*

Whichever arguments reformers use to build support for multiparty democracy, they will need to answer the common criticisms. Critics of electoral reform sometimes say that new voting systems are too complicated. In order to respond, ballot instructions could be developed that are quite clear. Voters could also learn to rank choices or make two separate choices via demonstration games. Voters in other multiparty systems, it could be argued, have no problem expressing preferences between candidates or parties and watch with interest as the votes are counted using more advanced methods.

Second, critics say, multiparty systems cause gridlock, making it harder for government to function. This is the main argument advanced to support the two-party

system: insuring political stability and minimizing factions.<sup>180</sup> Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Switzerland could provide counter-examples to this theory, however, having enacted comprehensive social welfare legislation after electoral reform.

It is important to point out that compromise is needed in all forms of government; multiparty systems at least afford everyone a voice at the table. Critics will site Weimar Germany as an example of the tendency of multiparty systems to cause the rise of extremist parties. They ignore that under a plurality system, the Nazi party would have become the official opposition in 1930 and won every legislative seat in 1932. If extremism is a concern, thresholds can be promoted to avoid giving representation to small, extremist parties.

The public would be likely to believe that trust in government is a better way of measuring political stability and that claims that electoral reform is a recipe for instability are generalizations made from the worst types of systems.<sup>181</sup> Activists also might point out that the two-party system does not produce particularly strong government. Two-thirds of the years from 1946 to 1998, the U.S. government was divided; one party held the presidency and another had control of Congress.<sup>182</sup>

Regardless of the rationales used, debates about the value of multiparty democracy will certainly proceed indefinitely. Multiparty system advocates will never succeed in convincing everyone to oppose the two-party system and support reformation. Opponents of multiparty democracy, however, also will not succeed in convincing the

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<sup>180</sup> Hasen, 350.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>182</sup> Allen, 5.

public that the system is effective as it stands. The social and political diversity of the American electorate would likely manifest itself in a wide call for more political choices if the opportunity for reform presented itself.