

How Wallace and Reagan challenged the Democrats

by Freyda Greenberg and Kathleen Klenetsky

The presidential campaigns of former Alabama Governor George Wallace and President Ronald Reagan represent two important challenges to the anglophilic takeover of the two-party system in the United States. While not comparable to the National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC) in content of program or in breadth of political undertaking, the Wallace and Reagan campaigns are comparable to the NDPC in that they were serious grass-roots movements fueled by popular revolt against the refusal of especially the Democratic Party to represent the economic interests of its constituents.

The Wallace phenomenon

The Wallace for President phenomenon first made its mark as early as 1964, when the economic depression we now see unfurled was first getting under way. Following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Democratic Party leadership under the dominance of Lyndon Johnson and his party associates began to abandon ties to the state and local organizations. This, coupled with the beginnings of serious economic dislocation among predominantly blue collar workers and farmers fueled a modest but impressive Wallace bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1964. Wallace entered three primaries, winning 34.1 percent in Wisconsin, 29.9 percent in Indiana, and 42.8 percent in Maryland. The percentage of working class vote drawn by the Wallace line in cities like Milwaukee and Baltimore pointed to the viability of a presidential bid on a third party ticket; Wallace, however, decided to support Barry Goldwater's GOP campaign.

By 1968, the Democratic Party had made a decisive break with the tradition, established during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, of supporting economic growth. In its stead, the party leadership promoted a left-liberal redistributionist policy—urging constituents to share, i.e., compete for jobs, wages, and benefits under conditions of worsening economic contraction. It was under these conditions that the civil rights stance associated with the party in the early 1960s began to smell like a cheap scheme to pit blacks and

other minorities against the rest of the population.

Wallace, correctly profiling the Eastern Establishment press, flaunted his racist and militant anti-integration planks to draw maximum coverage. While the Wallace campaign was comprised of economic proposals—mainly the anti-big government, tax reform planks that years later got Ronald Reagan the presidency, and a sharp critique of the bankruptcy of the Democratic Party leadership—the press featured the racism.

Wallace's 1968 independent candidacy

For his second attempt at the presidency, George Wallace ran a third-party campaign that achieved ballot status in all 50 states. While the party leadership tried to dredge up support for Hubert Humphrey out of what remained of the party machinery around the country, Wallace built an independent machine. The bulk of his financing came from small contributions—contained in sometimes over 100,000 letters in one day. Even the polls were forced to reflect his growing grassroots support. By late September, Wallace trailed Humphrey by only seven points in the polls.

The labor support for Wallace was outstanding. Knowing this, the leadership of the AFL-CIO and the UAW denounced Wallace's politics as racist and mounted the largest political education campaign in U.S. history in the effort to defeat him. This campaign included 125 million pamphlets, 100,000 door-to-door canvassers, and more than a million phone calls. Despite this, Wallace won five states in November, 45 electors, and 13.6 percent of the popular vote. One out of every six voters in the north and two out of every five in the south was a union member. While Nixon edged Humphrey by less than a million votes, Nixon won 32 states compared to Humphrey's 14 states. Wallace determined the vote in 25 states, came close to defeating Nixon in South Carolina and Tennessee, and gave Humphrey the plurality in Texas.

In the aftermath of the 1968 defeat, the party leadership did not seek to recoup the loss of its constituency organization so vividly exposed by Wallace's

successes, but rather proceeded with its left-liberal transformation. The prominence of the McGovern candidacy in 1972 epitomized the party's demotion of what remained of the FDR alliance and its replacement with a new, ultra-liberal party based on the young activists of the peace movement. By the time of the 1972 party convention, the composition of the delegates would change drastically: delegates under 30 would rise from 2.6 percent to 23 percent; women delegates would rise to 38 percent; and the percentage of trade unionists at the convention would drop down to 13 percent.

The 1972 campaign

Wallace announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination in January 1972 and proceeded to win primaries in Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, Michigan, and Maryland, and came in second in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Indiana, West Virginia, and Oregon. In Florida, Wallace got 42 percent of the vote in the primary, double that of Humphrey.

As in 1968, Wallace inspired "stop Wallace" campaigns from the AFL-CIO leadership. Democratic Party National Chairman Lawrence O'Brien disavowed the Wallace campaign shortly after it was announced. But in spite of these efforts, the steamroller grew and Wallace succeeded in influencing other candidates—Nixon and Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.)—to adopt public anti-busing stands.

What did stop Wallace, however, was his serious injury by the bullet of Arthur Bremer on May 15, 1972. After placing third at the nominating convention, Wallace chose not to pursue an independent campaign for medical reasons. McGovern, who became the party's nominee, entered the convention with 25.3 percent of the primary votes cast. Wallace, entering the convention, trailed by less than two percent.

The epilogue to the 1972 race was delivered by AFL-CIO President George Meany, who proclaimed that a "small elite of suburbanites and students took over the apparatus of the Democratic Party." In a highly unusual move, the AFL-CIO executive council voted to remain neutral in the election rather than support McGovern. With no party base, the McGovern candidacy went down to a resounding defeat in November.

Destruction of both major parties

With the traditional Democratic Party alliance forged by FDR's pro-growth programs a shambles, a vast labor, farmer, and minorities constituency was up for grabs. However, the same British-inspired interests, including Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance, who engineered the self-destruction of the Democratic Party, were ensuring that the Republican Party would be in no better condition. The bottom line for the opponents of the existing American party system was to cripple both

parties, disenfranchise and demoralize the American electorate, and then elect candidates like Jimmy Carter, using the mass media and without a party organization.

In 1972, the GOP was being torn apart by a series of scandals and internal subversion punctuated with the targeting of Vice-President Spiro Agnew, his replacement by Gerald Ford (and when Ford became President liberal Republican Nelson Rockefeller), and the Water-gating of President Nixon. With George Wallace personally side-lined, this strategy would have succeeded then were it not for the coalescence of the Wallace base and the growing number of dislocated voters from both parties around the person of California Gov. Ronald Reagan.

Reagan had firmly established himself as a leading anti-liberal spokesman during his terms as governor of California. As early as 1974, Reagan decided to make a bid for the presidency, announcing his candidacy against incumbent Gerry Ford in March 1976. Significantly, Reagan attacked Ford's sponsorship of the "secret diplomacy" of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

After five primary losses, including a loss in New Hampshire by less than 1.5 percent, Reagan decisively defeated Ford in North Carolina, recording the first primary victory against an incumbent since 1952.

Reagan went on to win nine more primaries out of the remaining 19 that he entered. He went to the convention with 45.9 percent of the primary votes compared to Ford's 53.3 percent.

Citizens for the Republic

Following his defeat at the 1976 convention by Gerry Ford, Reagan broke the traditional "rules" of the GOP by immediately preparing for the next round. In early 1977, off the momentum of his primary race and the almost instantaneous anti-Carter reaction, Reagan formed the Citizens for the Republic, a political action committee that would serve as his constituency machine going into the 1980 campaign.

The initiative was timely and went beyond the narrow issues of the Wallace campaign, while drawing in the Wallace base plus more. The strong points of the committee effort were the issues it chose and the method of organization. In contrast to the Wallace campaigns, Reagan's appeal was far broader: a new coalition that would benefit the working man and eliminate government bureaucracy.

Reagan targeted the very institutions that were dominating the Democratic and Republican National Committees—the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations. Reagan conveyed an optimism that America could and would be great again—drawing more and more support with each TV speech by President Carter calling on Americans to sacrifice in a new

period of hardship.

What the Citizens for the Republic aimed to do was to create a structure parallel to the official Republican Party—and totally controlled by Reagan loyalists. Aside from publishing a column by Reagan in each of its newsletters, the committee provided other public platforms for their proto-candidate. Under the group's aegis, Reagan conducted numerous cross-country speaking tours, giving countless media interviews in the process.

The committee also provided financial and political support to Republican candidates for Congress and other political offices. This part of its operation helped to establish significant blocks of support for Reagan in key areas of the country, which could be relied on to turn out the vote come the November elections. Another part of the Committee's operations involved training grassroots activists through a series of workshops and seminars. Those recruited in this way formed the core of Reagan's official campaign machine, Citizens for Reagan, when the actual campaign went into high gear.

The weakness of the committee was that it was not solely controlled by Reagan loyalists, in much the same way that Mr. Reagan's current administration is not. Following the experience of the Wallace campaign, the circles who had engineered the crises in both parties determined that there be a way to control future grassroots movements. From this was born what is today known as the "neo-conservative movement." Unlike the Wallace machine that was built by Wallace and a core of activists, individuals like direct-mail fundraiser Richard Viguerie and the British intelligence outpost Heritage Foundation insinuated themselves among the truly patriotic sections of the operation.

In this fashion, Mr. Reagan's relationship to his constituents was mediated by organizations other than his own campaign—eventually resulting in the subversion and disorientation of the campaign. Only a comprehensive domestic and international political program that was capable of translating Reagan's aspirations into real gains for the American people could have surfaced and isolated the British-infected portions of the campaign apparatus. Lacking that, shortly after his first big win in the 1980 primary in New Hampshire, Reagan wavered in the program that had built his base with increasing evidence that he was beginning to take on the GOP habits of making deals. By the time Reagan brought his campaign to Texas, he had decided not to challenge also presidential hopeful George Bush for his affiliation with the Trilateral Commission. At the convention, after accumulating 60 percent of the vote from primary victories in 29 states, a tribute to the base he had built over the course of six years, and easily attaining his party's nomination, Reagan chose George Bush as his running mate for the general election.

The Harrimanites downplay the NDPC

by Robert Zubrin

How do other sections of the Democratic Party view the unusually rapid growth of the National Democratic Policy Committee? To find out, the EIR's Robert Zubrin talked with aides to the Democratic National Committee, spokesmen for other political action committees, officials of the ousted Carter administration, and members of the opposition camp in several state primaries. This sampling of the responses indicates a particularly keen interest in the 20 percent statewide vote for NDPC-backed candidate Steven Douglas in the May 25 Pennsylvania gubernatorial primary.

Peter Fenn, director of Pamela Churchill Harriman's Democrats for the '80s, reached at Mrs. Harriman's home:

"The LaRouche party is a fringe party. I think that you would find that people who cast their ballots for it are not very committed. I think that LaRouche is a fringe politician. He is kooky and has no real credibility within the Democratic Party. I don't think that he is talking about anything that is likely to capture the imagination of the American people. He is the one who has people at the airports with signs saying things like 'more people have died in Ted Kennedy's car than in nuclear power plants.' There is a degree of bizarreness in his whole approach. Conspiratorial theories abound. There was a thing in his newsletter recently about someone trying to kill his wife in West Germany. It's all rather Twilight Zone-ish.

"What I'm intrigued about is where they get their money. It would be interesting to examine their FEC records. . . . They say they represent the grand coalition of the FDR? Hah! I've never seen any platform of theirs that makes any sense. Just kooky, conspiratorial stuff and simplistic arguments for nuclear power.

"This Douglas vote was just a fluke, a function of spending a lot of media money in a limited market. I don't think it will happen again."

Stuart Eizenstat, a former domestic policy adviser to President Carter, at his Washington, D.C. law firm:

"The Democratic Party is certainly in disarray now, but I don't see the LaRouche group as a significant force nationally. This Pennsylvania vote is the only significant