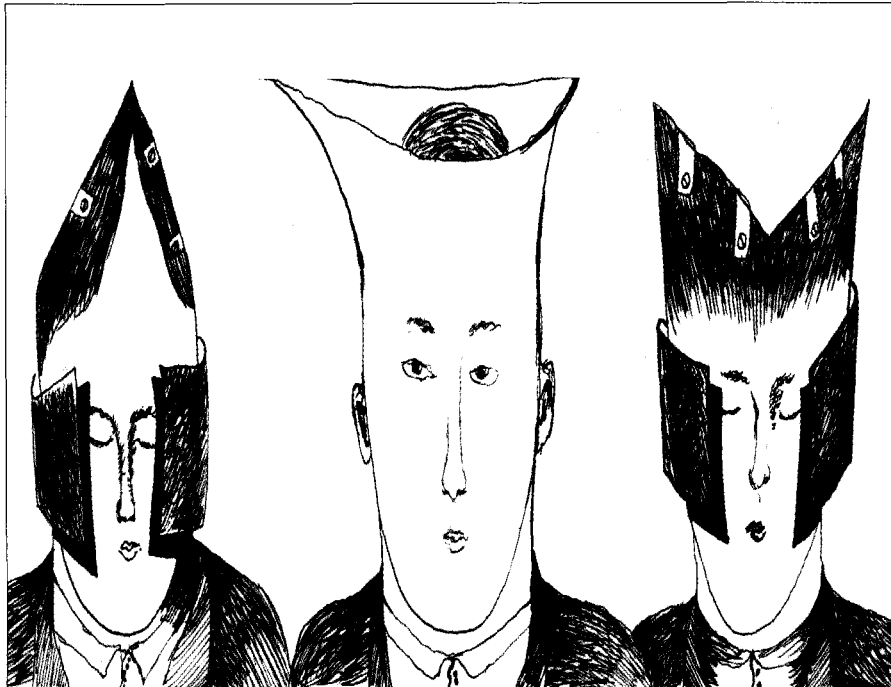


Political Trust-Busting

The Third-Party Option

by Jeffrey Tucker



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

In the “nihilistic politics of the 1990’s,” warns a newswriter for the *Wall Street Journal*, “party loyalty counts for almost nothing.” The writer means obeisance to the two major parties, which the civics books imply are ordained by God to rule us. In fact, America needs a breakup of this two-party system, which looks more and more like a one-party apparatus designed to stave off all threats to Leviathan. We need a serious third party, a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth: whatever it takes to spread the “nihilism” D.C. so fears. A Bosnianized country at least deserves a political system that genuinely reflects the reality around us.

We need new political parties, lots of them, parties that come from below, from the people, devoted to advancing single causes or complex philosophies, sane or nutty, scholarly or cranky, warm and fuzzy or filled with hate. Bring them on, and scare the dickens out of the elites. Now is the time for old-fashioned populism. The public’s political instincts may be flawed, even deeply, but they are not as defective as the actual agendas of those in power.

The case for sticking with the Republicans gets thinner every day. Whenever you are tempted to cheer them for a seemingly principled stand, wait a few hours, and they will show their true colors. When, for example, they defeated Clinton’s disgraceful crime bill (at \$33 billion, the only “criminals” it punished were middle-class taxpayers), Newt Gingrich told the nation how badly he wanted a crime bill, just not this one. And

though he voted against the trimmed-down measure (\$30 billion), he and other Republicans prepared the way for it by advocating the same idea that motivates Clinton: federalizing crime control.

This bill passed in what the *New York Times* described as “one of the most partisan sessions” in memory. Sure, and only a few weeks earlier a \$13 billion “education” bill designed to bail out public schools had passed in the Senate, 96 to 4. Partisan “fights” over the medical industry seem increasingly frivolous, with everyone agreeing that insurance companies should be stripped of the right to reject the uninsurable and with only the Democrats being intellectually honest enough to call for complete socialism.

Bill Clinton won the presidency with only 23.76 percent of the eligible electorate, the lowest level of support since 1824. If his presidency is remembered as anything other than a political catastrophe, it will be thanks to the Republicans. In his first two years, Clinton’s only notable legislative “success” has been NAFTA, the regional regulatory and trade bloc the Republicans handed him on a pewter platter (paid for by aggressive lobbyists and unwilling taxpayers). Soon after, the Loyal Opposition geared up to do the same with the World Trade Organization, a GATT-created supranational agency to manage world trade from Geneva, Switzerland. But very few of those who actually and unwillingly sustain government with their tax dollars favored either NAFTA or the WTO.

Despite media handwringing about obstructionism and gridlock in Washington, fewer and fewer political issues are subject to partisan debate at all. When was the last time we had

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a rip-roaring debate on foreign aid, guaranteed foreign loans, or military bases in Europe and Japan, to name just three examples? Both parties are committed to these expensive rackets, yet surely among the general population liberals and conservatives can at least agree that public money ought to stay within United States borders.

The list of issues that—as they say—transcend party lines is long indeed. Both parties favor maximizing government revenue, through increasing taxes, cutting selected marginal rates, or putting young mothers to work. Both favor American involvement in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. Both favor centralized educational authority and continued federal funding for public schools. Both are subservient to the interests of large corporations, and that usually means supporting various forms of fiscal and regulatory favors under ever-changing ideological banners. And both maintain wish-lists of countries against which we should wage war, and whether it is Haiti or North Korea, it is still American lives on the line.

Neither party seriously considers cuts in the most grisly aspects of the welfare state or limits on immigration, questions monopoly control of money and banking in the Federal Reserve, advocates large cuts in the inheritance tax, wonders about the \$300 billion we spend on the military, rethinks the space program, or opposes the official discrimination of civil rights. I would like a political party that raises questions like: Why do we need a Surgeon General? Why should a free country have an armed Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms? Why is it illegal for banks to make privacy contracts with their depositors? The list of inadmissible yet perfectly reasonable questions is endless.

If Republicans were in a real competition with Democrats, it would be in their interest to cause more trouble. A *Time*-CNN poll taken in August revealed that 91 percent of the public has little or no confidence that Washington can solve social problems. How, then, can we explain why both parties pretend otherwise? What accounts for the bipartisan conspiracy against the wishes of the electorate? We could point to the explanations drawn from public choice economics (log-rolling and minority-interest politicking), but there is also a broader reason. The major parties represent the interest of the Establishment, and the Establishment stays established thanks to the power of the central state. Thus, both parties must maintain and enhance that power, regardless of public opinion.

There are enormous barriers to bringing about the dream of authentic electoral choice. People who try to start third parties to field candidates at either the national or the state level say the system is rigged against them at every level. That is to be expected. The Soviet system was also rigged; that is what happens when an oligarchy controls a nation. But that system eventually broke up, and ours may, too.

What follows is an account of some third parties organized nationally as efforts to further the breakup of the two-party system. Hundreds exist on paper, but since one has to draw the line somewhere, I have listed only those that have run at least one candidate for public office in 1992 or since. There are no vote totals or “success” stories here; by that standard all these groups would seem to be failures. By any principled standard, however, all are successes for even surviving. We will go from right to left, accepting that these ideological categories get a bit messy in third-party politics.

The American Party was founded in 1969 as a hard-right, constitutionalist group devoted to resisting the onslaught of everything worth hating about American politics, including centralization, egalitarianism, and high taxes. It is isolationist on foreign policy and wants a cutoff of immigration. The party's Wallaceite views still scare media types not in touch with the private views of the masses. It has a publication (the *American*), which explains their opinions, but it is their present slogan that is truly tantalizing: “The American Party is what America was!” It also opposes NAFTA and the WTO. (P.O. Box 25940, Richmond, Virginia 23260)

The Populist Party is well named, given its textbook populist bent. The Populists despise big government and big business and oppose foreign aid and foreign wars. Though they want tax cuts, they are not laissez-faire on economic issues. As ideological heirs of the free silver movement, their monetary views are of the Lincoln-money variety: inflationist but opposed to the banker cartel. They are especially exercised about Washington's abuse of police power, as in the Waco massacre and the Randy Weaver shoot-out in Idaho. On trade, they are old-fashioned protectionists but were also passionately opposed to NAFTA and the WTO. (*Populist Observer*, P.O. Box 15499, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237)

Think of the United States Taxpayers Party as the '64 Goldwater campaign without the Cold War rhetoric. Run by activist and former Nixon official Howard Phillips, it made a splashy debut in 1992 among Republicans tired of Reagan-Bush compromises. The party emphasizes issues like repealing the income tax, ending foreign aid, respecting states' rights, and clamping down on inflationary monetary policies. Oddly, however, it also worries about the Panama Canal and Jonas Savimbi. In short, this is pretty much the old *National Review*. That the party is considered extreme right is a measure of how times, and the right, have devolved. In California, the Taxpayers Party merged with the American Independence Party for the 1992 election. (450 Maple Ave. East, Vienna, Virginia 22180)

The Patriot Party is the new kid on the block, made up of former Northeastern Perot activists with a flair for organizing, plus members and leaders of the New Alliance Party, Lenora B. Fulani's party, which always had the feel of black nationalism to me. But what the heck: if Gingrich and Clinton can team up on NAFTA, then Perot and Fulani can team up to stop it and similar insider tricks. It wants no foreign aid, no foreign lobbyists, and no foreign wars. It has wasted no time in fielding candidates for Senate races in Pennsylvania and plans a big splash in 1996. (16 South Broadway, Wind Gap, Pennsylvania 18091)

There should be a day of national mourning if the Prohibition Party ever fades from the scene. Founded in 1872, the party today takes “credit” for achieving the direct election of senators, women's suffrage, and, naturally, Prohibition. In short, its followers are the Protestant pietists you read about in histories of the Progressive Era, which makes them seem somewhat reactionary today. They want to privatize Social Security, institute a gold standard, end illegal immigration, respect states' rights, return education to the states, sell all government-owned enterprises, abolish foreign aid, defend our shores, institute free trade, stop preferential trade treaties like NAFTA and GATT, and pass the Human Life Amendment. Oh yes—and prohibit all liquor. “No other major party has addressed the issue in their platform,” a spokesman explains. (*National*

Statesman, P.O. Box 2635, Denver, Colorado 80201)

The Libertarian Party's national platform is the most intellectually rigorous of any third party's, but in actual practice this party becomes unpredictable. It favors eliminating taxes, ending central banking, stopping foreign aid and interventionism, but also opening borders completely (thereby one-upping Julian Simon) and repealing state-level restrictions on pornography. The national party has trumpeted NAFTA and fallen silent on foreign policy, and so increasingly the real action has shifted to the state level. Recall that New York radio porno-jock Howard Stern was briefly a Libertarian gubernatorial candidate. (*Libertarian Party News*, 1528 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20003)

The Grassroots Party has an appealing name, until you figure out that it is a pun. Its single issue is the repeal of laws against marijuana, plus a more robust enforcement of the Bill of Rights. It makes large and seemingly exaggerated claims for the glories of hemp, its potential use in clothing, timber, etc. It takes no position on economic issues or on foreign policy, but in Iowa this party merged with the Libertarians. (*The Canvass*, P.O. Box 8011, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108)

The Natural Law Party, founded in 1992, is to politics what Unitarianism is to religion, a way to be involved without sectarian struggles. Rather than agitate for this or that particular policy, the Natural Law Party favors various stress-reducing meditationist strategies ("TM-Sidhi") for achieving world peace and ending domestic violence. Its actual program favors "limited government," "universal education," decentralist solutions to public problems, and an end to American subsidies for European militaries. "America should not be the world's policeman," the platform says, although the United States should take a "parental" role in fostering world prosperity. A move is under consideration to merge the Libertarians and the National Law Party before 1996. (*Solutions*, 51 West Washington St., Fairfield, Iowa 52556)

The Green Party operates in 72 countries, but the United States only got its version in 1984, and it did not become nationally active here until 1989. It favors environmentalist policies and nonviolent solutions to social problems, decentralism, "grassroots democracy," noninterventionism in foreign affairs, multiculturalism in social affairs, a "post-patriarchal" social order, and more social responsibility. It opposes foreign aid generally but would like to strengthen the role of the United Nations. It is very active in seven states in opposition to both parties and fought NAFTA tooth-and-nail. Asked why it took so long for the United States to have a Green Party, a spokesman pointed to the peculiar "winner-take-all" electoral system of this country. (*Green Horizon*, RFD 2, Box 3292, Bowdoinham, Maine 04008)

The New Party is mainstream progressive, and it recently joined with the Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party. It is an attempt to create a nondogmatic leftist party, opposed to full-blown socialism but favoring a single-payer medical system. In practice, its politics are close to the black caucus of the Democratic Party. It tends not to run candidates but to endorse candidates who are already running. Generally, it avoids foreign policy. (*Progress Report*, 227 West 40th St., #1303, New York, New York 10018)

The Socialist Party was founded in 1901 and claims, probably rightly, to have had an enormous influence on American public affairs from that time to the present. Today, they say, "Socialism is not mere government ownership, a welfare state,

or a repressive bureaucracy," but rather "a new social and economic order in which workers and consumers control production, and community residents control their neighborhoods, homes, and schools." Hmm. Although it is not clear why the United States needs yet another social-democratic party besides the Republicans and Democrats, the Socialists do appear to be more independently minded on foreign policy. (*Socialist*, 516 West 25th St., #404, New York, New York 10001)



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would disappear, to be replaced by honestly named parties, including the America First Party, the Southern League, the Western Independence Party, and the Property Rights Party. Then we could see how many people would vote for the Foreign Aid Party or the GATT Party.

I admit to feeling silly when I asked the woman on the phone what the Communist Party stands for, and she seemed to get suspicious when I did. This is the party of Gus Hall, who has sounded much like a Democratic candidate in years past: favoring more national concern for workers and for the poor, supporting socialized medicine, and the like. Today, the party is roughly Gorbachevian in domestic affairs and relatively isolationist on foreign policy, which puts it to the right of the following Trotskyite groups. (*People's Weekly World*, 239 West 23rd St., New York, New York 10011)

The Socialist Workers Party (*The Militant*, 406 West St., New York, New York 10014) is the quintessential American Trotskyite party, with splits in every decade for 50 years. It competes with offshoots, including the Workers League (*The Bulletin*, P.O. Box 5174, Southfield, Michigan 48086) and the Workers World Party (*Workers World*, 55 West 17th St., New York, New York 10011). Without getting into the internecine struggles—they do not acknowledge each other's existence—there is little hope among these groups of uniting in the common struggle on behalf of exploited workers and peasants.

In addition to all these national parties, which are necessarily limited due to national election rules, there are also hundreds of parties at the state level. Only a baker's dozen have fielded candidates in the last two years, however. With the revival of states' rights/Tenth Amendment concerns in every state in the country, these are probably due for a growth spurt.

The Alaska Independence Party (745 East 4th Ave., #500, Anchorage, Alaska 99501), once solidly secessionist, is the

party of Governor Walter Hickel, Nixon's former Secretary of the Interior, who was elected in 1990. But factionalism has splintered the group to produce the Alaska First Party, which Hickel may join. The name is the most appealing and repeatable party name to come along in years. Indeed, why not put Alaska first? Or Montana, Idaho, Nevada, or Texas?

The Peace and Freedom Party of California (P.O. Box 2325, Aptos, California 95001) is less a full-fledged political party than a container for various left-wing groups that work to capture its enviable ballot status. From year to year, it bounces around from sexual issues to racial issues to immigration issues, none of which appear to have anything to do with peace or freedom.

In Illinois, a new party called Term Limits and Tax Limits (215 Ridgewood Rd., Riverside, Illinois 60546) is devoted to pushing just that. It was spawned by the statewide initiative movement, which kept getting swatted down by the state supreme court. Rather than continue having referendum topics stolen away from them, a Republican pro-life businessman formed this party as a way to vocalize opposition to judicial tyranny.

Connecticut's voters can choose between Concerned Citizens of Connecticut (50-12 Northridge Dr., Waterbury, Connecticut 06708), a conservative group, and A Connecticut Party (231 Farmington Ave., Farmington, Connecticut 06032), which is the party of current liberal governor Lowell Weicker. In Vermont, a party named the Liberty Union (183 Western Ave., Brattleboro, Vermont 05301) does little but run a candidate against Representative Bernie Sanders. You see, before Sanders became famous, he ran as their nominee, so they hate his guts.

Washington, D.C., has its own Statehood Party (441 4th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001), which would be a good idea if the party also favored an impenetrable partition around the city—to keep outsiders away, of course. Unfortunately, the movement is an open scam to swell the Congressional Black Caucus. This party's goal gets set back with every evening news broadcast of the day's death toll.

May the politics of the nation soon look like New York's in 1994. Besides the two major candidates, disgruntled Republicans, Democrats, and Perotvians have formed the Independence Fusion Party to push the other two around. The Conservative Party (486 78th St., Brooklyn, New York 11209) is shoving Republicans to the right on tax issues, and the Right-to-Life Party (Box 144, Centerport, New York 11721-0144) supports a Republican social agenda while others cower. The Democrats have to worry about the Liberal Party (381 Park Ave. South, New York, New York 10016) holding leftist feet to the fire, while the New Alliance Party (500 Greenwich St., #201, New York, New York 10013) will also be on the ballot for those who want to stick it to whitey. Anyway, everyone will probably vote along racial and ethnic lines anyway, as seems to be a still-legal tradition in New York.

None of this considers the explosion of "independents" running at all levels. I confess to being overjoyed that socialist Bernie Sanders is in Congress as an Independent. It forces the television, radio, and print media to list something other than the two major parties—even though his votes are largely predictable. And Douglas Wilder in Virginia, lacking other options, has decided to run as an Independent against Democrat Charles Robb and Republican Oliver North for Senate. At least he will get the black vote. Running as an Independent, the

Ross Perot phenomenon made for an interesting 1992; let it continue in 1996.

Some people say it is wasting your vote to pull the lever for a third party. Not at all: you cement your irrelevance by voting for the two major parties in any national election. You are statistically more likely to be hit by a car on the way to the voting station than to swing an election. Better to be one of the 1,000 to vote for the Prohibition Party than one of the 40 million who vote Republican. At least that way you cause the Establishment trouble, however minor.

Of course, third-party candidates always have problems dealing with the media. The media rarely mention alternatives until a few days in advance of the election, and then they use disparaging tones. Here is a representative example, from the *Washington Post* (November 9, 1992): "On ballots across the nation are the names of people utterly unlike George, Bill, and Ross: women, blacks, pensioners, a convict, and a mystically inclined scientist—all seeking the highest office in the land." Gee, we had better stick with another honest, rich, and rational white guy.

When third-party candidates face the camera, they have none of the polish of those who have trained for it their whole lives. That is because they are *real* people with *actual* jobs. The best comment I heard about James Stockdale, Ross Perot's vice presidential nominee who debated Gore and Quayle, was this: "How refreshing to see a real person on national television." And that is exactly why most people found this debate so difficult to watch. We need to get used to real people like our friends and neighbors being on national television and in public office; this is what used to be called self-government.

In the past, people would say there is too much at stake to throw your vote away on a third party. National security! The Supreme Court! Fiscal sanity! All these hung by a thread. But these arguments are less and less plausible. The next Republican in national office will be very much like the last four, or probably worse. Likewise for the next Democrat. So why not make your voice count? For my part, I would vote for a man like Gus Hall before I would vote for a phony like Jack Kemp.

Note the lack of real conservative options at the national level for Republicans. It is not clear why. There are plenty of liberal candidates and groups, which is odd given how faithfully the Democrats have upheld a leftist agenda. But the Republicans have betrayed their alleged principles for 40 years and presided over the largest expansion of the regulatory and welfare state since the end of World War II. OSHA, the EEOC, the EPA, and the Disabilities Act are all Republican programs. Add to that the advocacy of global empire, still a reflexive tendency among most of them, and the Republicans really should be called the Big Government Party. Until they rethink their commitment to globaloney and corporate welfare, they always will be.

Why, then, has there not arisen a formidable liberty-and-property alternative to mainstream Republicans? A theory batted around for years says that conservatives desire a depoliticized social order, which is the proper attitude, but that disinclines individualists to engage in radical political organization and agitation. We might also point to the disincentives created by the media. They portray liberal third-party candidates as affable idealists, but imply that anyone to the right of the official Republican nominee is probably a secret admirer of Hitler.

That is why groups like the United States Taxpayers Party represent praiseworthy pioneer efforts to give authentic conservatives someone to vote for besides whomever Northeastern Rockefeller interests choose to serve up. Another alternative might be the Constitution Party being formed by movie producer Aaron Russo (1590 Lindacrest Dr., Beverly Hills, California 90210), which promises libertarianism without the baggage. This is probably just the beginning of what will become available as we approach the 1996 presidential election.

Third-party organizing would seem to make sense right now. It might be especially successful in the South. Though the region holds the largest conservative voting bloc in the country, some people in the Deep South will never support a Republican candidate under any circumstances. Pollsters sometimes attribute this to generational gratitude toward Franklin Roosevelt, but, in fact, memories go back further. The Republicans will never be forgiven for the crimes of Reconstruction, that barbarous decade which no one else in the nation remembers and which, in the South, is only spoken about in hushed and angry tones.

Where is the party that represents the South's interests as a region? Where are the famed fire-eaters of yesteryear, the Rebels admired by all of 19th-century Christendom? The old-timey States Rights Party of Georgia does not even field candidates anymore. As it stands, Southern nationalists, who

increase every time a battle flag is torn down, lack a party vehicle of any sort. The South needs a party devoted to one end: throwing off the yoke of northern oppression. This party could point out that Washington treats the South as a conquered nation: the Justice Department "investigates" every minor social disturbance from Ovett, Mississippi, to Wedowee, Alabama.

Trends suggest our future lies with political parties with an anti-Washington regional focus. We need, for example, a Party of the West to counter the two parties of the Northeast. How wonderful to see national debates between six candidates, two representing D.C. and four representing various regions. If only 9 percent of the public thinks D.C. can solve our social problems, there is no reason to swear allegiance to the central state as if we were in a world war. Whatever your politics, it is better to fight it out on the state and local levels than to send taxes to Capitol Hill.

Our two parties are a tax-gouging cartel. How nice if they would disappear, to be replaced by honestly named parties, including the America First Party, the Southern League, the Western Independence Party, and the Property Rights Party. Then we could see how many people would vote for the Foreign Aid Party or the GATT Party. In this field, even partisans of the Articles of Confederation could get another crack at it.



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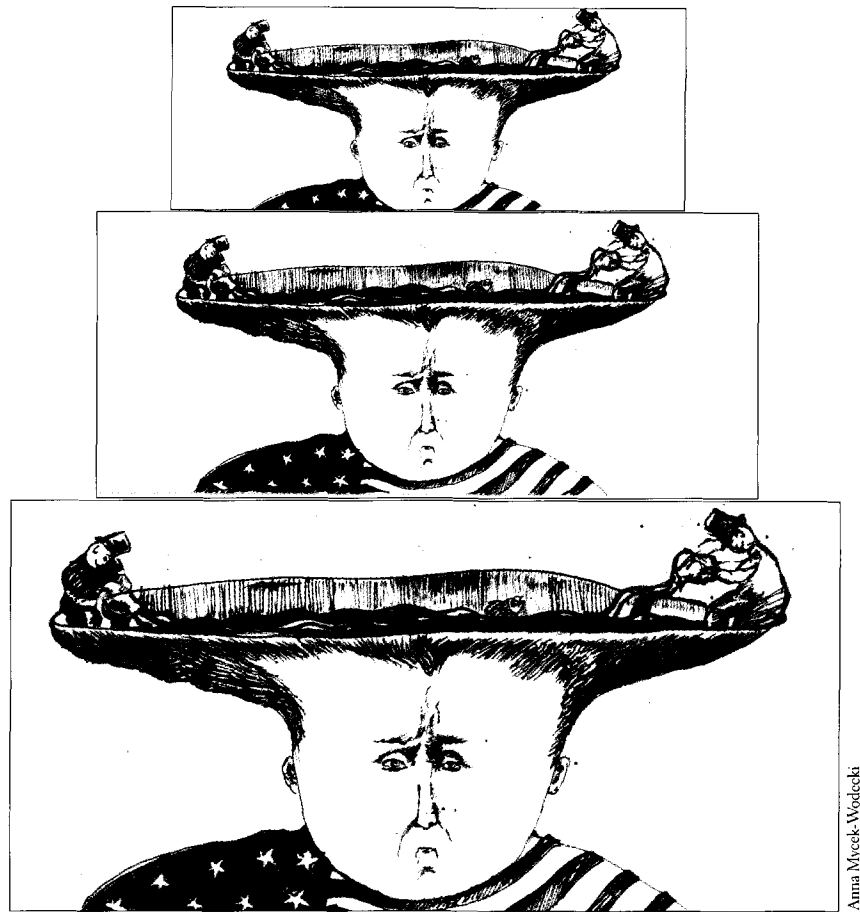
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NOVEMBER 1994/25

The Impotent American Voter

by Richard Winger



Our great-great-grandfathers, if they were American voters, enjoyed greater opportunity to change policy with their votes than we do today. It is a paradox that as the number of Americans permitted to vote has increased over the past century, the power of those votes has diminished. Many legislators and judges, in their hearts, do not really believe that the voters know best, and they have curtailed certain kinds of voting rights that Americans formerly exercised. The rights of American voters to organize new political parties, and to vote for candidates of their choice, are weaker today than they were 70 years ago.

Recently, voters in Canada, Russia, Japan, and Western and Central Europe created new political parties and either voted them into power or gave them the status of dominant opposition parties. What would happen if the voters of the United States created a new political party and tried to vote it into power? If the new political party were created during an even-numbered year, voters would learn that, in many states, it could not even get on the ballot, no matter how much popular support it had.

The Republican Party was founded on July 6, 1854. During the autumn 1854 elections, the Republican Party elected more members to the U.S. House, and more state governors, than

any other party. That was how American voters of the 19th century told the government to change direction. The same is true today in most other nations, where the deadline for a new political party, or any political party, to qualify for the ballot is often only a month before the election. In South African elections this year, Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party qualified for the ballot less than a week before the election.

But in the United States, incredibly, some states require a new party to qualify for the ballot more than a year before an election. A new party that wishes to qualify for the November 1996 ballot in California and Ohio will be required to do so no later than mid-October 1995. If a new party had been organized on July 6 of this year, it would not have been able to get on the November 1994 ballot in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, or Wyoming, even if it had the ability to find candidates and organize petition drives in a single week. That is because the legal deadline for qualifying for the ballot in those states precedes mid-July of an election year. So much for any group of voters who might have wanted to duplicate the successful founding of the Republican Party!

Early qualifying deadlines for new parties are fairly recent de-

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