is necessarily becoming more conservative, but that when voters don't see the political system able to handle large problems they vote conservatively. To the extent that the parties continue to be perceived as ineffective in articulating and solving the larger issues of the day, a conservative agenda—independent of which party holds power—will continue to dominate.[65]

As the Clinton-Gore administration headed into its final year, journalist William Greider recounted:

[Clinton's] accomplishments, when the sentimental gestures are set aside, are indistinguishable from George [H. W.] Bush's. Like Bush, Clinton increased the top income tax rate a bit, raised the minimum wage modestly and expanded tax credits for the working poor. He reduced military spending somewhat but, like Bush, failed to restructure the military for post–Cold War realities. He got tough on crime, especially drug offenders, and built many more prisons. He championed educational reform. He completed the North American Free Trade Agreement, which was mainly negotiated by the Bush administration. On these and other matters, one can fairly say that Clinton completed Bush's agenda. It is not obvious that a Democratic successor in the White House would be much different.[66]

Greider's criticisms may have made liberals blanch, but he was right. The Clinton-Gore administration pushed through conservative policies—like ending welfare and running a balanced budget—that Republicans could never have won. No less than Alan Greenspan, the conservative chairman of the Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006, agreed. "Bill Clinton," Greenspan told the *Wall Street Journal*, "was the best Republican president we've had in a while."[67]

Chapter Four

Social Movements and the "Party of the People"

The official version of U.S. history reads as the gradual extension of democratic rights and government benefits to ever-wider layers of the population. But although the Declaration of Independence famously declared, "all men are created equal," the Constitution excluded large sectors of the population from exercising the most basic democratic and civil rights. Indeed, the Constitution codified the system of chattel slavery and counted disfranchised slaves as three-fifths of a person in apportioning representation—providing slaveholding states systematic overrepresentation in the House of Representatives.[1]

As abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass argued, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."[2] Struggle has been a defining, recurring feature of U.S. history. Slavery itself was finally abolished only by the Civil War, after some 250 years of struggle by slaves and abolitionists. Nearly every important gain—including women's right to vote, workers' right to form unions, abortion rights, affirmative action, and gay rights—has come about not because political leaders offered reforms willingly but as a result of struggle. On the other side, the U.S. ruling class has proven itself historically as one of the most class-conscious and aggressively combative in the world. The level of violence and militarization of labor relations in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries far exceeded that of its Western European

counterparts, and yet the U.S. working class has never won anything approaching the social welfare provisions established by European social democracies in the mid-twentieth century.[3]

But repression is only part of the explanation for the failure of U.S. social movements to achieve more or to build a lasting political alternative to the corporate domination of politics. In this regard we must focus not only on the "stick" of repression, but also on the "carrot" of political representation through the two-party system that has served as one of the bulwarks of American political stability. Historically, the two-party system has played the role of shock absorber, trying to head off or co-opt restive segments of the electorate. It aims to manage political change so that change occurs at a pace that big business can accept. For most of the last century the Democratic Party has been the most successful at playing this shock-absorber role.

Writing in 1972, radical scholar G. William Domhoff eloquently outlined the role the Democratic Party plays in accommodating the oppressed and exploited to the mainstream political system:

> Despite the social and economic hardships suffered by hundreds of millions of Americans over the past one hundred years, the power elite have been able to contain demands for a steady job, fair wages, good pensions, and effective health care within very modest limits compared to other highly developed Western countries. One of the most important factors in maintaining those limits has been the Democratic Party. The party dominates the left alternative in this country, and the sophisticated rich want to keep it that way. Democrats are not only attractive to the working man, but vital to the wealthy, too, precisely because they are the branch of the Property Party that to some extent *accommodates* [emphasis in original] labor, blacks, and liberals, but at the same time hinders genuine economic solutions to age-old problems.[4]

The Democrats didn't always play this role. Republicans like Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Wisconsin progressive Senator Robert LaFollette stood for liberal reforms in their days. Nevertheless, over most of the last one hundred years—and especially since the New Deal era—the Democrats have been the party to which progressive social movements have looked for support. But this support has come with strings attached—and without the movements' best interests at heart. This history of Democratic co-optation and betrayal begins with what might be a considered a "dress rehearsal" for the twentieth century—the collision between the Democrats and the Populists.

The Democrats and the Populists

Emerging from the Jacksonian and Civil War periods, the Democrats remained very much a party of urban machines and rural county notables. The only mass support the party could claim was its downscale voters and its patronage workers. Unlike many European social democratic parties that emerged at this time, the Democrats had no genuine mass membership. Party leaders were committed to low tariffs, white supremacy, and the spoils system. At the time when the Democrats were reestablishing themselves as the dominant party in the South, however, a mass popular movement of farmers, Black and white, shook the system to its core.

The local elites that ran the Democratic Party in the South were overwhelmingly representatives of the landlord class that had reestablished its control after the defeat of Reconstruction in 1876. Through the 1880s, small farmers became increasingly indebted and impoverished, sparking a protest movement that "united yeomen and tenants across state and racial lines" and constituted itself into the Farmers Alliance.[5] The Farmers Alliance presented a threat to the local landlords as long as it targeted them for responsibility for the farmers' plight. As it did so, it threatened to undermine the local base of the planter class who depended on at least passive support at the ballot box from white farmers.[6] In the period up to 1891, the Farmers Alliance acted as a protest organization that organized small farmers to challenge aspects of the existing tenancy system. It also dabbled in local electoral experiments, creating or supporting campaigns and demanding a combination of reforms ranging from the expansion of paper money (greenbackism) to legal equality of labor and capital, independent of the two major parties.

In 1891 activists within the alliance pushed for the formation of an independent Peoples' Party (the Populists) that included representatives of the Knights of Labor and the Colored Farmers' Alliance. Only a year earlier, hundreds of politicians had been elected to state legislatures across the South on pledges to support the Farmers' Alliance demands of public ownership of railroads and support for a publicly financed "subtreasury" to finance crop loans. However, many of these politicians—almost all of them Democrats—were happy to accept the alliance's support but uninterested in fulfilling the alliance's demands. So by the time the Populists came on the scene, the alliance rank and file

was fed up and open to a political alternative.

Historian Robert C. McMath, Jr., explained the movement's crossroads:

> The real question was whether, once reform through the Democratic Party had failed, the great mass of southern voters could be persuaded by the logic of insurgency: *if* Alliance principles took precedence over partisan loyalty and the Democratic Party rejected those principles, *then* [italics in original] men of integrity must leave the party of their fathers.... To bring Alliance voters to such a drastic step and to enfold them in an alternative culture of American politics called for an unprecedented campaign of political education.[7]

McMath neatly sums up a choice that all fighters for social justice have debated when confronted with a two-party duopoly that ignores their demands.

Without a doubt the Populists scored major successes in the early 1890s, electing Populists to state legislatures and to Congress. They appeared on the verge of either making the United States a three-party political system or even displacing one of the two major parties. As an electoral phenomenon, the Populists gained support between 1892 and 1896. Populist presidential candidate James Weaver took more than one million votes, winning twenty-two electoral votes and five states.[8] At the same time the Democrats, who had won the presidency and the Congress in 1892 for the first time since the Civil War, were suffering the hammer blows of the most severe economic depression in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the Democrats weakened from the impact of the 1892–93 economic panic, the time seemed ripe for a third-party challenge from the Populists. At its founding convention, held in 1892 in Omaha, Nebraska, a confident People's Party announced a radical program of a progressive income tax, public ownership of railways and utilities, and support for labor organization.

But just when the Populists appeared to be on the verge of remaking national politics, two things happened. First, the Democrats changed their rhetoric to weaken the Populists' appeal. "Anything you can do to soft-soap the Alliance will go down to your interest," said a leading Democratic contender for the Kentucky gubernatorial nomination. The Democratic nominee pledged to "get tough" on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.[9] Second, with the Democratic Party facing extinction in whole swaths of the country, some Democratic politicians decided that regaining political footing required that they appeal to some of the Populist program. And for this they chose to appeal to the most innocuous part of the Populist program, the demand for free coinage of

silver. Legions of "silver Democrats" were born.[10]

With the movement's organization in decline and the Democrats seemingly open to Populist issues, the argument inside the party of the "fusionists," those who advocated Populist alliances with the major parties, gained momentum. The argument in favor of fusion wasn't based on the strength of the movement from below demanding that the major parties support Populist positions. Rather, it was based on a decline in confidence of the movement to win on its own. The Populist politicians elected in the early 1890s formed the main fusionist constituency:

> At bottom, the third party's internal struggle was a contest between a cooperating group of political office-seekers on the one hand and the Populist movement on the other. The politicians had short-run objectives—winning the next election. In contrast, the agrarian movement, both as shaped by the Alliance organizers who had recruited the party's mass base of partisans and as shaped by the recruits themselves, had long-term goals, fashioned during the years of cooperative struggle and expressed politically in the planks of the Omaha Platform. While the movement itself had a mass following, the only popular support that the office-seekers could muster within the third party itself was centered in those regions of the country that the cooperative crusade had never been able to penetrate successfully.[11]

The weakening of the Populists' farmer-labor base and the transformation of the party into a more conventional electoral machine resulted in a watering-down of the party's radical 1892 Omaha program. Initially intended as the electoral expression of a movement organized around the demands of its class base, the People's Party increasingly gravitated to the lowest common denominator: the demand for free coinage of silver, a late nineteenth-century panacea of middle-class reformers. Perhaps not coincidentally, the only major Democrat to withstand his party's smashing defeat in the 1894 midterm elections (when it lost 113 seats in Congress) was Nebraska Representative William Jennings Bryan. Bryan forged a winning coalition of Democrats and Populists in Nebraska, and his championing of free silver won him not only Populist support, but also that of silver mining interests, which mounted a two-year campaign to take over the Democratic Party for "free silver."

When the Democrats met to choose a candidate to run in the 1896 presidential election, Bryan managed to steal the nomination from the widely unpopular conservative sitting president, the "Gold Democrat" Grover Cleveland. From the outside this appeared as a triumph of popular opinion over an unpopular president. From the inside it was clear

that the silver lobby had helped to engineer Cleveland's overthrow. And while silver interests were reshaping the Democrats to their will, they were also funneling money to the fusionists in the Populist Party, who used it to organize pro-fusion state delegations to the national convention. When the Populists met in convention after the Democrats had nominated the ticket of Bryan and conservative banker James Sewall, the fusionists pulled out all stops—exploiting every advantage of their hold on the party machine and convention operations they could—to win an endorsement for Bryan over the objection of much of the party's rank and file. "Given Bryan's commitment to silver, the income tax, and other reforms, and given the close working relationship he had developed with Populists in Nebraska, the Populists felt compelled to give him their nomination, but tried to maintain their independence by naming a Populist [Tom Watson] for vice president."[12]

In the end, the Populist old-timers who wanted to build an alternative to the two-party duopoly knew the convention sounded the death knell of their party. Illinois liberal reformer and Populist William Demarest Lloyd summed up the party's dilemma: "If we fuse [i.e., endorse Bryan], we are sunk. If we don't fuse, all the silver men we have will leave us for the more powerful Democrats."[13] Lloyd was quite prescient. The election of 1896 turned out to be the one that ushered in a generation of Republican rule. The Democrats were consigned to almost forty years of minority party status. And the Populists, who had folded into the Democrats in 1896, never recovered as an independent party. Howard Zinn explained this denouement: "It was a time, as election times have often been in the United States, to consolidate the system after years of protest and rebellion…. [W]here a threatening mass movement developed, the two-party system stood ready to send out one of its columns to surround that movement and drain it of vitality."[14]

The tragedy of Populism's defeat was felt in many ways, most sharply in the South, where it destroyed the most powerful interracial movement in U.S. history up to that point. When white supremacist Democrats swept subsequent elections and pushed through legislation disenfranchising Blacks and poor whites, there was no movement from below to challenge them. Worse, some former Populists, despairing of the possibility of social change in the business-dominated Gilded Age, accommodated to the politics of their former enemies. Most dramatically, Tom Watson, "who had dropped out of politics after the defeat of 1896, reemerged a virulent racist and anti-Semite in 1904."[15] The Southern

ruling class's defeat of Populism helped it, through the Democratic Party machines, to cement its hold over the "solid South." And while Democratic control in the South was complete, the party dwindled as a national force. The Democrats wouldn't be revived as a majority party until the Great Depression, when at that time they would harness the power of another social movement—the movement for industrial unions.

Labor Remakes the Democrats, The Democrats Return the Favor

The Great Depression marked the greatest crisis U.S. capitalism had faced since the Civil War. Political and business leaders worried that the country was ripe for upheaval—perhaps even for revolution. "I say to you, gentlemen, advisedly, that if something is not done and starvation is going to continue, the doors to revolt in this country are going to be thrown open," an American Federation of Labor (AFL) official told Congress in 1932.[16] Powerful movements of industrial workers grew up over the next few years, culminating in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1935 and a massive strike wave in 1936 and 1937.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt had not taken office in 1933 with the intention of championing workers' rights or of creating a welfare state. For much of his campaign against President Herbert Hoover, he attacked Hoover for "reckless" spending and pledged to balance the budget by cutting federal spending by 25 percent.[17] The 1932 Democratic platform affirmed the call for a balanced budget, a 25 percent cut in the federal spending, and a call for the states to follow suit. In words familiar to free-market capitalists, it also called for "the removal of government from all fields of private enterprise except where necessary to develop public works and natural resources in the common interest." What is perhaps more amazing is the fact that the platform said nothing about labor issues and did not even include the word "union."[18] By encouraging business collusion through the National Recovery Act, Roosevelt's first tentative steps toward addressing the crisis in the economy bore a number of similarities to initiatives the discredited Hoover administration had taken. Historians John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody argue that the idea of a sharp break in the attitude to business between the Hoover administration and the Roosevelt administration is "exaggerated" because the "shift was not from laissez-faire to a managed economy, but rather from one attempt at management,

that through informal business-government cooperation, to another more formal and coercive attempt."[19]

But circumstances forced Roosevelt's hand. As discussed in chapter 2, the inclusion of Clause 7a in the NRA had the unintended consequence (at least from the government's point of view) of spurring an explosion of union organizing. "There was a virtual uprising of workers for union membership" the American Federation of Labor executive council reported to the AFL's 1934 convention. "[W]orkers held mass meetings and sent word they wanted to be organized." Unions organized hundreds of locals within weeks. Existing unions tripled, quadrupled, or quintupled in size. New unions seemed be created overnight.[20] Between 1933 and 1937, the number of workers who were union members jumped from 2.7 million to more than 7 million. Driving these numbers upward was a quantitative and qualitative leap in the class struggle, as the number of strikes—a large number of them demanding union recognition against employers who refused to follow Clause 7a's recognition of collective bargaining—jumped from 1,856 in 1934 to a peak of 4,740 in 1937, with the number of strikers involved leaping from 1.12 million to 1.86 million in the same period.[21] Many of these strikes, especially the three 1934 general strikes in Toledo, San Francisco, and Minneapolis, took on a near-insurrectionary character.[22] Between 1934 and 1936, eighty-eight workers were killed on the picket line.[23]

Roosevelt responded to the pressure of the rising class struggle by legalizing collective bargaining rights for workers who were using the strike weapon to demand them. But he didn't do so enthusiastically. Liberal Democratic Senator Robert Wagner introduced what became the National Labor Relations Act in 1934. The bill aimed to create a permanent labor relations machinery that would make union recognition and labor relations a matter regulated by the government instead of one fought out on the shop floor between workers and bosses. Industry opposition to the bill made FDR withhold his support, causing Wagner's bill to stall in Congress. But the 1934 strike wave "confirmed Senator Wagner in his conviction that the nation needed a new labor policy."[24] Wagner reintroduced the bill, which won overwhelming support in Congress in 1935. David M. Kennedy describes Roosevelt's reaction to the Wagner Act:

> Roosevelt only belatedly threw his support behind it in 1935, and then largely because he saw it as a way to increase workers' consuming power, as well as a means to suppress the repeated labor disturbances that, as the act claimed,

were "burdening and obstructing commerce." Small wonder, then, that the administration found itself bamboozled and irritated by the labor eruptions of Roosevelt's first term and that it moved only hesitantly and ineffectively to channel the accelerating momentum of labor militancy.[25]

To be sure, the Roosevelt administration often found itself at odds with the rabidly anti-union corporate class during this tumultuous period. These New Deal haters rallied around the American Liberty League, founded in 1934 to organize capitalists against the New Deal. The League was the brainchild of conservative Democrats, including Al Smith and John W. Davis (the 1928 and 1924 Democratic candidates for president, respectively) and John Jacob Raskob (insurance mogul and former Democratic National Committee member), before it inducted Republican capitalists like the DuPonts. The Liberty League, "devoted to defeating Roosevelt, trade unions, liberal Democrats in Congress, 'communism' and assorted social welfare causes" backed Republican Alf Landon for president in 1936.[26] In the heat of the 1936 campaign, Liberty League spokesperson Jouett Shouse charged "the New Deal represents the attempt in America to set up a totalitarian government, one which recognizes no sphere of individual or business life as immune from governmental authority and which submerges the welfare of the individual to that of the government."[27]

But however much animosity corporate leaders expressed against Roosevelt, his pro–working-class legislation served a larger purpose in salvaging the capitalist system during this enormous crisis by ensuring that the system would not be forced to concede more than was absolutely necessary to contain the class struggle. A remade Democratic Party was the vehicle Roosevelt used to absorb the rising labor movement within the confines of the existing political establishment. Socialist Dan Labotz explained FDR's calculations:

> Roosevelt realized that if he was to succeed in reforming and reconstructing American capitalism, he would have to broaden the social base of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party that had elected him in 1932 had been based on the corrupt political machines of big cities like Chicago and New York, on the white votes of the Solid South, on the American Federation of Labor, and on financiers like Bernard Baruch who reportedly "owned" sixty congressmen whose campaigns he had financed. That base was simply too narrow to deal with the upheavals in the industrial cities of the Great Lakes region and among the farmers of the Midwest.[28]

By supporting the creation of Social Security and of the National

Labor Relations Act in 1935, Roosevelt laid the groundwork for capturing the labor movement vote for the Democrats in the 1936 election and beyond. Roosevelt's legacy has meant that many generations later, millions of working Americans still regard the Democrats as the party that speaks to working-class interests. Ever since the Great Depression, organized labor has provided crucial financial and organizational support for Democratic candidates, however little labor receives in return.

Roosevelt's capture of the labor movement wasn't a one-way proposition. He had willing collaborators among labor leaders whose vision for organized labor offered them a "seat at the table" alongside the nation's policymakers. Even before the formation of the CIO, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was "a labor statesman in waiting, waiting for a movement to represent and a regime to accept that representation," according to his biographer.[29] This observation doesn't take away from the initiative and courage that top CIO leaders like Hillman and John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) exhibited when launching the CIO. But it does make clear what they, or at least what New Deal loyalists like Hillman, ultimately wanted from the industrial union movement. Rather than seeing it as a means by which workers could organize an independent voice to win their demands, they saw it as a means to give labor leverage in the halls of power.

The leadership of the CIO was "connected by a thousand threads to a newly emergent managerial and political elite, an elite which in collaboration with the CIO would foster a permanent change not only in the national political economy but in the internal political chemistry of the Democratic Party and in the prevailing politics of production in basic industry," commented labor historian Stephen Fraser.[30] It wasn't long before these leaders' commitment to remain credible in the halls of power rendered them opponents to rank-and-file initiatives. Roosevelt shrewdly used his power to cement the loyalty of the trade union officialdom to the New Deal and to the Democratic Party. Mine workers' leader Lewis, who later broke with Roosevelt, complained about the difficulty of organizing a labor-based opposition to the administration:

> [FDR] has been carefully selecting my key lieutenants and appointing them to honorary posts in various of his multitudinous, grandiose commissions. He has his lackeys fawning upon and wining and dining many of my people.... In a quiet, confidential way he approaches one of my lieutenants, weans his loy-

alty away, overpowers him with the dazzling glory of the White House, and appoints him to a federal post under such circumstances that his prime loyalty shall be to the President and only a secondary, residual one to the working-class movement from which he came....[31]

Rank-and-file union activists—especially those on the front lines of the class struggle—were far less loyal to the Democrats or even to Roosevelt. By 1933, pressure began to mount among unionists for the creation of labor's own party to end unions' collaboration with both Democrats and Republicans. Calls for a labor party reflected a newly confident working class's desire to fight on its own. But they also reflected a response to the strikebreaking tactics that unionists had faced under even the most liberal, pro–New Deal Democratic Party state and local governments. In 1935 alone, twenty states' militias, the majority of them called up under Democratic governors, were turned against strikers in seventy-three disputes.[32]

There is no question that the creation of a mass labor or social-democratic party would have marked a great step forward for the American working class—toward political action independent of the capitalist parties. Several state-level labor federations experimented with support for "farmer-labor" parties in this period. In Washington and Oregon, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, modeled on a similar organization in Canada that was the organizing center for what eventually became the New Democratic Party, won state and congressional seats in this period. In Minnesota the Farmer-Labor Party won the governorship and five House seats. In Wisconsin the Progressive Party, with the backing of the Socialist Party, played a significant role in politics in that state.[33] And 21 percent of those questioned in a 1937 Gallup poll agreed that a labor party should be formed.[34] This pro-labor-party sentiment threatened Roosevelt's plan to incorporate the labor movement into the New Deal coalition by channeling class struggle into the New Deal labor-relations machinery.

CIO leaders Lewis and Hillman made a priority of garnering CIO support for Roosevelt in the 1936 election. But in order to do so, CIO leaders had to squelch pro-labor-party sentiment among CIO members. This meant sabotaging unionists' own initiatives independent of the Democrats. When the newly formed United Auto Workers voted in 1936 to support the creation of a national farmer-labor-party, CIO leaders threatened to remove funding for organizing the rest of the auto

industry if the UAW didn't rescind the vote and back Roosevelt. The delegates capitulated at this crucial turning point. Sharon Smith notes:

> CIO leaders faced a serious dilemma: having promised to deliver union support for Roosevelt, they now faced the possibility of a mutiny within the ranks of one of the fastest-growing unions in a key industry. That the UAW delegates had already voted, however, did not stop CIO leaders from taking quick action to ensure the union's support for Roosevelt.[35]

In places where strong-arm tactics like these didn't work, CIO leaders used more devious methods to win workers' votes for Roosevelt. In New York Hillman backed the formation of the "American Labor Party" to provide a more palatable ballot line for socialists in New York labor circles, who voted for this "labor" party—that in fact channeled votes to Roosevelt. In 1936 the CIO created Labor's Nonpartisan League (LNPL), which worked to provide FDR with money and votes for the 1936 election.

Union leaders thus plowed the CIO's resources into Roosevelt's and other New Deal Democrats' reelection campaigns, solidifying the alliance between labor and the Democrats. Though there were subsequent demands for the formation of a labor party, the 1936 election and its immediate aftermath represented a watershed for Roosevelt—squandering the tremendous opportunity for political independence from capitalist politicians that existed for the labor movement.

In forming CIO-PAC (Political Action Committee) in 1943, the CIO ratified its refusal to form a labor party. CIO-PAC functioned as one of many competing interest groups within the Democratic Party in pledging money to Democratic candidates. One historian explained the political rationale behind CIO-PAC: "In launching the new Political Action Committee, the CIO leadership specifically rejected any 'ultraliberal party in the name of the working man.' Instead, they sought to discipline the unruly left wing by channeling its energy into a firmly controlled political action group that could function safely within the two-party system."[36]

The CIO's hybrid nature as both a trade union organizing center and a recruiting sergeant for the New Deal Democratic coalition limited its historic potential. Socialist historian Art Preis summed up the CIO's legacy this way:

> The history of the CIO was to constantly appear as an admixture of two elements. On the one hand, mass organization of the industrial workers was to lead to titanic strike battles, most often initiated by the militant ranks despite

the leadership. On the other, the workers were to be cheated of many gains they might have won because of the intervention of the government, which had the backing of the CIO leadership themselves. Unwilling to "embarrass" the Democratic administration…the CIO leaders kept one arm of the CIO—its political arm—tied behind its back.[37]

Thus the Depression-era labor movement failed to achieve some important goals. First, the U.S. labor movement, unlike those in other industrial countries, did not develop its own political party, however radical its members were on the industrial front. Second, it failed to organize large sections of the working class in the South and the West, which remained conservative, anti-union strongholds. Both of these shortcomings had damaging, long-term impacts on the labor movement. And both of them are directly attributable to CIO leaders' failure to break with the Democratic Party at this critical juncture in U.S. history.

The United States's entry into the Second World War should have shattered any illusions that unions had friends in the Democratic Party. Twice in 1941—before the United States officially entered the war—the government, including the military, intervened to break major strikes at the Allis-Chalmers agricultural implements factory in West Allis, Wisconsin, and at the North American Aviation plant in Inglewood, California. In the second of these, Roosevelt ordered federal troops to take over the plant.[38] When the United States entered the war, union leaders agreed to the wartime "no strike" pledge in exchange for the dues check-off system. Thus, union treasuries swelled while workers' living standards eroded. As Smith notes, "Rapid union dues growth—without the expense of depleted strike funds—allowed the CIO to buy an enormous office building in Washington, D.C., in 1942…and to hire a staff to fill it."[39] Despite the CIO's loyalty to the Democrats, the Democrats showed little concern for the rights of labor. In 1943, the Democratic Congress passed the Smith-Connally Act, empowering the president to break strikes in war industries. Of the 219 Democrats who voted for the act, 191 had received CIO-PAC support.[40]

Business Unionism Triumphant: The Truman Years

The United States emerged from the Second World War as the preeminent world power. Large sections of American business broke with the Republicans' traditional high-tariff policies to support successive Democratic

governments' "free trade" policies. "Free trade" and the restructuring of the world banking system under U.S. tutelage became the pillars of the Democrats' "interventionist" foreign policy in what became the longest expansion in capitalism's history.[41] Meanwhile, wartime inflation had driven workers' living standards back to pre-war levels. Demonstrations of unemployed workers, many newly returned soldiers, mounted around the country in 1945 and 1946. After the war, U.S. workers erupted in a massive strike wave, exceeding even 1937's level. More than five million workers went on strike in the year after Japan's surrender in August 1945. To Art Preis, the number of workers involved and their weight in U.S. industry meant that "the 1945–46 strike wave in the U.S. surpassed anything of its kind in any capitalist country, including the British General Strike of 1926."[42]

The postwar explosion in working-class militancy stretched the close relationship between union leaders and the Democratic Party. Harry S. Truman, inaugurated as president upon Roosevelt's death in April 1945, reacted to the strike wave by taking the employers' side, using wartime powers to break strikes. When a nationwide railroad strike shut down passenger and freight traffic for more than a month, Truman announced he would seize the railroads and draft strikers into the army. In May 1946, as Truman was on Capitol Hill requesting authority from Congress for the authority to break the strike, word came that the railroad union leaders had accepted Truman's terms to end the strike. Truman announced the union's capitulation to thunderous applause in the Democratic-controlled Congress.[43] To the employers' dismay, pressure for an independent labor party swelled once again. Railway union leader A. F. Whitney pledged his entire union treasury to defeat Truman in 1948. Other unions passed resolutions pledging support for third-party efforts or political action independent of the Democrats.[44] International Ladies Garment Workers Union leader David Dubinsky called for the formation of a labor party because unions "cannot satisfy themselves with a party that includes the Southern reactionaries or the industrialists in the Republican Party."[45] The potential of a labor party or a third political party with significant labor backing threatened not only Truman but also the union leaders who had worked so hard to solidify their role in the Democratic Party.

Following the 1946 elections—in which Republicans took over Congress largely due to workers' discontent with the Democrats—Truman

cut a deal with union leaders that enabled him to pull workers behind the Democratic Party once again. In return for labor's support for his reelection, Truman pledged to veto the Taft-Hartley anti-union bill after it passed in 1947. The bill, sponsored by Republican Senator Robert Taft and Republican Representative Fred A. Hartley, codified a collection of anti-union measures that had been proposed in Congress for years: outlawing sympathy strikes or "secondary boycotts" of one union in solidarity with another; allowing states to outlaw the "closed shop," the requirement that all members of a workforce in a company with a union contract be members of the union; requiring all unions and union leaders seeking redress from the National Labor Relations Board to swear that they were not members of the Communist Party or supporters of any organization seeking the overthrow of the U.S. government "by force of arms," and giving the president the right to force a sixty-day "cooling off period" in any strike deemed threatening to the national interest.[46] Truman vetoed the bill, knowing that Congress—with Democrats casting the key votes—would override his veto.

"[CIO and Steelworkers President Philip] Murray, [AFL leader William] Green, [UAW President Walter] Reuther, Whitney, and other labor leaders promptly hailed Truman, forgetting his virulent anti-labor record. Truman's veto action was to prove a vital factor in rallying labor support for this reelection in 1948, although he was to use the Taft-Hartley Act against labor more zealously than a Republican might have dared."[47] Nevertheless, the trade union leadership poured millions through the CIO-PAC and the AFL's League for Political Education into Truman's 1948 campaign.

The old New Deal coalition, and a few trade-union dissidents—most of them connected with the Communist Party—rallied to the third-party challenge of former Vice President Henry Wallace. Wallace's Progressive Party challenged the anticommunist focus of Truman's foreign policy and its retreat across the board from domestic reform. Initial enthusiasm for Wallace—the presumed inheritor of labor's 1946 discontent with Truman—was snuffed out after CIO and AFL leaders determined that Truman would be a "lesser evil" than the election of a Republican president in 1948. UAW president Walter Reuther, a one-time admirer of Wallace who had toyed with the idea of backing a labor-supported third party, did a quick about-face as soon as Wallace's 1948 candidacy became a reality. "As soon as Wallace announced his

candidacy, the Reutherites rushed back into the Democratic fold, turning on the Progressive Party with a furious barrage of red baiting."[48]

In explaining his come-from-behind victory in the 1948 election, Truman is supposed to have said, "labor did it."[49] Organized labor certainly expended a tremendous amount of resources for Truman, highlighted by a Labor Day rally for the president in Detroit that drew an estimated one million workers. And Truman had campaigned for a "Fair Deal," a much more liberal program than he had previously endorsed, and for the immediate repeal of Taft-Hartley. The "Fair Deal" was deliberately calculated to steal thunder from Wallace and to get labor on board Truman's campaign. Truman aide Clark Clifford, the architect of Truman's 1948 campaign strategy, later said,

> Labor at the time, inclined toward the Democratic Party and President Truman, but you will recall we had had some very fierce battles with labor…although labor would be inclined to vote for the Democratic Party, and I did not think under any circumstances they could be for the Republican nominee, yet that was not good enough. What we needed was an active, militant support of labor if we were going to have any chance to win.[50]

The Truman victory was heralded as a massive step forward for labor at both the AFL and CIO conventions. But Truman's promise to repeal Taft-Hartley was soon forgotten, as was the union leaders' promised fightback. "Labor's friend," Truman, invoked the Taft-Hartley Act twelve times in the first year of his second term to break strikes.[51] As part of the campaign to line up organized labor behind Truman's Cold War foreign policy, a variety of union leaders and Truman worked closely to weed out socialists, communists, and other dissidents from the unions between 1947 and 1950. In fact, Truman's 1947 Executive Order 9835 requiring loyalty oaths for federal employees opened the floodgates for a wave of political repression that later became synonymous with one of its most zealous promoters, Republican Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy.[52] The CIO followed suit. Complying with the Taft-Hartley anticommunist regulations allowed union leaders to use trumped-up charges and union-sponsored "raids" on the memberships of whole unions to drive out radicals who had helped build the unions in the 1930s.[53] Elimination of these "troublemakers" allowed liberal, anticommunist union leaders to consolidate their hold on the unions, relegating the unions themselves to second-class status in the corporate-dominated Democratic coalition. Ellen Schrecker, an histo-

rian of McCarthyism, concluded that organized labor was "the most important institutional victim of the Cold War red scare," because many labor leaders tied to Democrats, "collaborated with the witch-hunt…. McCarthyism weakened the entire labor movement, damaging Communists and anticommunists alike."[54] In 1952, during the Korean War, Truman went so far as to nationalize the steel mills in an unsuccessful attempt to break the steelworkers union.[55] Yet at no point was the CIO's loyalty to Truman ever questioned.

The Defeat of Operation Dixie

From its origins as the party of slavery, the Democratic Party had been a Southern- and rural-based party. The New Deal had challenged this. In providing the vehicle by which the national party remade itself, the New Deal also made the Democrats a more urban, Northern-based party with a large working-class voting base. The small-town bankers, merchants, farmers, and business owners who formed the backbone of the post-Reconstruction, Southern-based Democratic Party found this "situation was different—and more difficult to deal with, more threatening, more subversive. In the past, threats to their power had come from the Republicans and from the Populists. They had been able to draw themselves securely into their party, the party of the South, the party of white supremacy, the Democratic party—and to fight off the attacks. Now, however, the threat came from within that very party…."[56] Even though the Southern segregationist Democrats perceived this threat, they continued to hold a strong influence over the national party. Southern Democratic parties, who enforced disenfranchisement of Black voters inside their states, were until 1948 the most reliably Democratic states in presidential elections. Yet their leaders maintained their positions by nurturing a low-wage, "union-free" economy that led their congressional representatives into an alliance with conservative Republicans in Congress. As a result, the Southern reactionaries remained a permanent hamper to any attempt to enact reforms at a national level. As labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein explained, "…because of the vital role the South still played in national Democratic Party politics, even those liberals elected from solidly pro-labor constituencies were drawn into compromise and coalition with the right."[57] If anything would break this right-wing logjam, breaching the South's anti-union bastions would do it.

Unfortunately, one disastrous outcome of the CIO's longstanding commitment to the Democratic Party was the defeat of "Operation Dixie," launched in 1946 as a major effort to organize the Deep South. The CIO allotted a $1 million budget and hired four hundred organizers with high expectations for Operation Dixie. But two years later union leaders cancelled the entire effort, bowing to hostility from segregationist Dixiecrats who joined forces with anti-union employers to crush the union drive. The Dixiecrats received a boost when the national Democratic Party under Truman stepped up repression of "communists" in conjunction with the Cold War with the Soviet Union. As Michael K. Honey explained,

> [The CIO's] allies in the Democratic Party began moving to the right, as demagogic anticommunists began to take control of Congress and the media. In the South, the accelerating anticommunist rhetoric had the effect of cloaking segregationist and anti-union appeals with a new degree of patriotic respectability. Backed by the accusations of HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee, the main investigative body in Congress], and the news media, segregationists could argue more convincingly than ever before that groups organizing for labor and civil rights were subversive and that persecuting them furthered American interests in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Anticommunism and Cold War patriotism in effect gave segregation a new lease on life.[58]

The CIO leadership was forced to choose between organizing the South and maintaining the labor-Democratic alliance. As Art Preis explained their dilemma, "It was impossible to support the Democratic Party and not reinforce its Southern wing, the chief prop of the Jim Crow system and the one-party dictatorship in the South. The CIO leaders refused to wage political war against the Southern ruling class because that would undermine the whole Democratic Party and put an end to the Democratic Party-labor coalition."[59]

The labor movement never returned to the project of organizing the Deep South, which remains a nonunion stronghold in the twenty-first century. Companies in the North have used the availability of this large nonunion Southern workforce to their advantage ever since—by threatening to move to the Sunbelt if workers did not accept pay cuts and other concessions. A weakened labor movement is the living legacy of Operation Dixie's failure.

The events in the immediate postwar era—the short-circuiting of the militant postwar struggles, the purging of radicals from the labor movement, and union leaders' unconditional loyalty to the Democratic Party

are the roots of the crisis in the labor movement today. As union leaders came to rely more on winning acceptance in the Democratic Party for their roles as "labor statesmen," shop-floor organization and organizing drives suffered.

In each election victory following 1948, the AFL and CIO (and after their 1955 merger, the AFL-CIO) could claim credit for providing the key organizational, financial, and electoral support for the Democrats. In 1952, when CIO-PAC evaluated its own progress, it concluded that none of the pro-labor policies it had pressed had been won. Rather than concluding that tying CIO-PAC to the Democratic Party was a dead end and breaking the affiliation, CIO leaders decided to continue CIO-PACs ineffectual role in the Democratic Party.[60]

As a result, the alliance between organized labor and the Democratic Party solidified throughout the next twenty years while the coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans passed restriction after restriction on labor unions. In addition to the Taft-Hartley Act described earlier, the Communist Control Act (1954) allowed the government to remove elected union leaderships by fiat and to deny collective bargaining rights to "communist" unions. The Landrum-Griffin Act (1959) allowed union leaders to use "trusteeships" against militants and allowed the government to take over unions. It is no overstatement to say that the United States currently possesses the most tightly controlled union movement outside of countries run under forms of authoritarian rule or dictatorship.[61]

By the 1940s the full shape of the postwar compact among labor, the Democratic Party, and management had established itself. Although it provided labor with sought-after political representation, it limited the potential of the U.S. working class to win more.

Meanwhile, as the Democrats leaned more heavily on labor to get out the vote, labor increasingly identified its agenda with Democratic electoral victories. As one observer noted, "…the pattern of union participation [in Democratic elections] underwent a subtle change in which a partisan orientation to the Democratic Party gradually replaced the working-class orientation of the 1930s."[62] Mike Davis's observation on the "barren marriage" between labor and the Democratic Party is apt:

> The New Deal capture of the labor movement broadened the base of the Democratic Party, but it scarcely transformed it into an analogue of European laborism or social democracy. Indeed, what has been more striking than the

discrepancy between labor's role in electoral mobilization and finance, and the meager legislative rewards it has received in return? The survival of Taft-Hartley and the stunting of the welfare state in America are among the most eloquent monuments to labor's failure to "functionalize" its most day-to-day interests through the Democratic Party.[63]

The Democrats and the Civil Rights Revolution

African Americans today are one of the Democratic Party's most solid blocs of supporters. The explanation for this is simple. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Democrats succeeded in absorbing key sections of the civil rights and Black Power movements in a way similar to that in which they captured the labor movement. Initially this met with resistance from the party's traditional base, the Southern racist Dixiecrats. But by the 1970s, the party establishment recognized that losing the Dixiecrats was a small price to pay to incorporate a layer of Black politicians and Black voters into the party machine.

Several factors explained the weakening of the Dixiecrats' hold on the Democratic Party. Blacks' migrations from the rural South to Northern cities during the First and Second World Wars boosted the impact of Black votes on Northern urban party machines. In addition, the impact of voting rights legislation made Southern Black voters a constituency to be cultivated. Most importantly, Democratic Party electoralism acted as the chief method by which the system pulled thousands of Blacks radicalized in the 1968–1974 period back into its fold.

Until 1936 Blacks had been a solidly Republican voting constituency. Only the New Deal pulled large numbers of Black voters into the Democratic Party despite its segregationist wing. Black support for the Democrats, however, was no guarantee of Democratic support for Black demands. In one of many examples, civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph had to threaten a mass march on Washington in 1941 to win President Roosevelt's executive order barring discrimination in the war industries.

Kennedy and King

When the mass civil rights movement erupted in the late 1950s, a new day seemed to be at hand. In the 1960 presidential campaign, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., refused to endorse either Democrat John F.

Kennedy or Republican Richard Nixon, planning instead to demonstrate for civil rights legislation at both party conventions. However, Kennedy's telephone call to King as King sat in a Georgia jail cell earned Kennedy a liberal, pro–civil rights reputation and the tacit endorsement of civil rights movement leaders.

But for most of its time in office, the Kennedy administration did little to justify the civil rights movement's expectations of it. At a secret meeting between King's and Attorney General Robert Kennedy's staffs, held only a few months after the Kennedy administration arrived in Washington, Robert Kennedy and his staff claimed they were limited in what they could do about Jim Crow. But, they said, the Justice Department had much more ability to intervene in the states to protect voting rights.[64] The message was clear: the Kennedy administration preferred that civil rights groups pursue voting rights through a legal strategy, rather than take direct action against segregation. During the 1961 "Freedom Rides," in which civil rights workers rode buses through the South to force integration, Robert Kennedy denounced the Freedom Riders for providing "good propaganda for America's enemies" in the Cold War.[65] But on further reflection, Kennedy's Justice Department decided that it was better to approach the new civil rights militants with a carrot of federal aid than with the stick of public criticism. The Kennedy administration established, with foundation money, the Voter Education Project (VEP). Attorney General Kennedy explained the VEP's main purpose to Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) leader James Farmer in stark, crude terms: "If you cut out this freedom rider and sitting-in stuff and concentrate on voter registration, I'll get you a tax exemption."[66] At the same time, Kennedy's Justice Department was unwilling to pledge full protection to the freedom riders from racist attacks and the FBI was conducting a slander campaign against King.

The Kennedy administration hoped the VEP would divert attention from the undeniable fact that they had done nothing for civil rights in office. Having promised during his presidential campaign to eliminate housing discrimination by executive order "with the stroke of a pen," President Kennedy shelved the plan. For him it was more important to pander to the Southern Dixiecrats, whose leadership of key congressional committees would determine the fate of his legislative agenda. The Kennedy administration preferred to handle civil rights matters from an office in the Justice Department. But the movement kept forc-

ing itself and civil rights back onto JFK's agenda. The most serious crisis that forced the administration's hand was the Birmingham, Alabama, events of May–June 1963. A mass civil disobedience campaign to desegregate downtown businesses had been met with attacks from the likes of Police Commissioner Bull Conner, with the support of Alabama's Dixiecrat Governor George Wallace. Conner's use of dogs and fire hoses on children provoked the Black community of Birmingham to riot. At the White House, President Kennedy feared the situation would scuttle an agreement among conservative civil rights leaders, the Justice Department, and Birmingham elites to allow phased desegregation. Kennedy's Justice Department aide Burke Marshall warned the president, "If that agreement blows up, the Negroes will be, uh…." "Uncontrollable," Kennedy said. Marshall added "And I think not only in Birmingham…."[67] Fearing this threat to "law and order" nationwide, Kennedy announced federal troop movements to enforce the agreement. A few weeks later, he took to the federal airwaves to announce his support for the Civil Rights Act in Congress.

When leaders of the main civil rights groups, including King's SCLC and the more conservative NAACP and Urban League, called for a march on Washington to take place in August 1963, Kennedy responded by attempting as much as possible to shape the march's content. Having endorsed the Civil Rights Act in June 1963, Kennedy and the administration worked side by side with movement organizers to ensure that speakers would not criticize the administration's previous foot-dragging. The day before the march on Washington, the Kennedy administration's Burke Marshall and moderate civil rights leaders, including Bayard Rustin, Jr., forced Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader John Lewis to change his prepared speech. Lewis, arriving in Washington from the South where he had faced dozens of arrests and beatings at racist Dixiecrats' hands, planned to condemn the administration's initiative as "too little, too late," and to exhort marchers to "burn Jim Crow to the ground."[68] Lewis bowed to the pressure, but even his watered-down speech included these questions: "Where is our party? Where is the party that will make it unnecessary for us to march on Washington? Where is the political party that will make it unnecessary to march in the streets of Birmingham?[69] The Kennedy administration's shift—from treating civil rights issues as an annoyance to using them as another means to co-opt interest groups into the Democratic Party—served to echo Lewis's point.

LBJ and the MFDP

As the powerful civil rights movement was cracking segregation in the South, the Democrats belatedly attempted to put themselves at the head of the movement. President Lyndon B. Johnson used the phrase "we shall overcome" in a speech endorsing the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as if he had been a long-time advocate. In reality, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, important reforms though they were, simply ratified in law what Blacks had already won in struggle. In endorsing the two bills, LBJ was willing to countenance some disaffection among Southern segregationists. But he was unwilling to alienate the racists from his party completely. The 1964 example of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) provides the best illustration of LBJ's duplicity.

The 1960s Southern struggle for Black's right to vote—a fundamental democratic right that segregationist legislatures and racist violence had denied for more than six decades—required much more than simply pulling a lever for a candidate. In many areas of the rural South, it required setting up political institutions outside the control of the Jim Crow Democratic Party that ran the Southern governments. In Mississippi, civil rights workers created their own nonsegregated political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Within weeks of its founding, the MFDP signed up sixty thousand voters and nominated a delegation to represent it at the 1964 Democratic Party convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The MFDP planned a floor fight in order to be seated in place of the all-white Jim Crow Mississippi Democratic delegation on the grounds that MFDP was the only freely elected delegation in which all of the state's citizens could vote.

But LBJ wished to avoid a floor battle that might damage the televised image of party "unity" he wanted to project. More importantly, however, LBJ feared the defection of the "white South" to his opponent, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater, who, in a bid to attract Southern support, opposed the Civil Rights Act. As Democratic Texas Governor John Connally put it to Johnson, "If you seat those Black buggers, the whole South will walk out."[70] Not wanting to appear to be working on behalf of the Connallys of the party, Johnson turned to Democratic liberals and supposed friends of civil rights to do his dirty work. Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, who gave his support in

exchange for a vice-presidential spot on Johnson's ticket, cajoled the MFDP with pledges to support its general agenda while warning them against the disaster of a Goldwater presidency. UAW president Walter Reuther threatened to fire MFDP lawyer Joseph Rauh—who was also the UAW's lawyer—if Rauh didn't get the MFDP to back down. Reuther, whose union provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to what was then known as the "labor-liberal-civil rights" coalition, also threatened Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Your funding is on the line.... The kind of money you got from us in Birmingham is there again for Mississippi, but you've got to help us and we've got to help Johnson."[71] King ended up supporting the "compromise" that Humphrey's protégé, Minnesota attorney general Walter Mondale, foisted on the MFDP. Under this deal, the MFDP would receive only two delegates—to be chosen by the convention's Credentials Committee. With several major civil rights leaders, including King, Rustin, and MFDP founder Aaron Henry throwing their weight behind Humphrey's sellout, the Credentials Committee voted to seat the Jim Crow delegation. The MFDP delegation voted down the compromise overwhelmingly, calling it a "back-of-the-bus" agreement. It staged a protest in the convention hall, seizing the Mississippi delegation's seats until the Democratic leaders called in security guards and police to eject them from the convention center.[72] As it turned out, the Jim Crow delegation returned to Mississippi from the Atlantic City convention and endorsed Goldwater!

So while the Democratic Party machine was trying to accommodate the racists in the party, its liberal wing was trying to figure out how to corral the civil rights movement into the Democratic fold. The party's liberals performed their tried-and-true role: endorsing some reforms to win movement support while simultaneously trying to undermine the movement's independence and radicalism. In November 1964 an internal report of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), whose board included Humphrey, Reuther, and Rauh, urged ADA to push for a voting rights act because "quick granting of voting rights will mean quick recruitment by the Democratic Party, which will mean quick scuttling of the Freedom Democratic Parties and SNCC control." The report also endorsed "a quick freeze of funds on these projects which have a Freedom Democratic Party orientation."[73] It would be tough to find a better example than the MFDP episode at the 1964 convention to illustrate the treacherous role that Democratic Party lib-

erals—who continue to claim the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts among their greatest triumphs—have played in the face of real, living movements on the ground.

Safely reelected with an overwhelming Democratic majority in 1964, LBJ proceeded to enact the Great Society programs that he dubbed the "War on Poverty." These programs provided jobs, educational assistance, and economic advancement opportunities to the urban and rural poor. But they also provided a side benefit for the Democrats in their encounters with the civil rights and Black Power movements: a method to co-opt and at the same time to derail these powerful movements. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick called attention to the impact of the Great Society's Community Action Programs (CAP) in blunting the militant edge of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the civil rights organization:

> Participation in the War on Poverty was in several respects dysfunctional for CORE as an organization. Leaders who accepted the well-paying positions with CAP programs found it difficult to maintain active connections with their local affiliates, and since they were generally the most experienced chapter members, the loss was substantial.... People on [CORE's National Action Committee] even began to complain that the anti-poverty program "has been used to buy off militant civil rights leaders." Equally important, CORE's efforts with the CAP projects absorbed CORE projects.... On both counts the War on Poverty proved to be a significant contributing factor in the decline of chapter activity.[74]

From Black Power to the New Black Vote

The experience of facing racist violence in the South, along with being disillusioned by sellouts from Democratic politicians, radicalized a generation of Black activists who took up the banner of "Black Power" after 1965. For SNCC activists, Atlantic City had marked a turning point that

> ...completed SNCC's alienation from the mainstream of the movement and its estrangement from the federal government and the Democratic Party.... The treatment of the Freedom Democrats snapped the frayed ties that bound SNCC to liberal values, to integration and nonviolence, and to seeking solutions through the political process. The time had come for SNCC to formulate new goals and methods. To its battered and bloody field troops, the American dilemma had become irreconcilable and the American dream a nightmare. "Things could never be the same again," SNCC's Cleveland Sellers wrote later. "Never again were we lulled into believing that our task was exposing injustices so that the 'good' people of America could eliminate them. After Atlantic City, our struggle was not for civil rights, but for liberation."[75]

Perhaps the revolutionary Malcolm X spoke first for this generation of activists. Malcolm expressed more clearly than other movement leaders the racist nature of the Democratic Party. "When you keep the Democrats in power," Malcolm said in a 1964 speech to the Cleveland CORE chapter, "you're keeping the Dixiecrats in power.... A vote for a Democrat is a vote for the Dixiecrats...it's time for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot; and that if we don't cast a ballot, it's going to end up in a situation where we're going to have to cast a bullet. It's either the ballot or a bullet."[76] Malcolm praised the MFDP activists' courage. Nevertheless, he argued that much more radical action—a "Mau Mau," in his words[77]—was needed.

Thousands of Black radicals realized the need to break from the Democrats in this period, identifying their political outlook with radical groups like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The BPP, formed by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in Oakland, California, in 1966, began as a small group of activists who challenged police brutality by dispatching armed patrols to monitor police behavior in Oakland's Black neighborhoods. The party received international attention after it staged an armed demonstration against pending gun control legislation inside the California Assembly in Sacramento. The image of armed Black people standing up for their rights electrified Black America. Within three years, polls showed that 25 percent of the Black population had great respect for the BPP, including 43 percent of Blacks under twenty-one years of age.[78] What was more, the BPP's revolutionary nationalist and socialist ideology—a mélange of Maoism, third-world nationalism, and American radicalism—posed a challenge to the established, moderate civil rights leaders, and to their allies in the Democratic Party.[79] In many inner cities, the Panthers provided essential services like school breakfasts and drug treatment—programs that were victims of chronic underfunding from federal, state, and local authorities.

A different type of challenge from Black radicalism grew up in the heart of another liberal institution tied to the Democratic Party—the United Auto Workers union. The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), formed in the Hamtramck Assembly Chrysler plant in Detroit in 1968, represented a fusion of radical nationalist and socialist politics with the power of the industrial working class. Launched with a wildcat strike against speedup in the plants, DRUM quickly challenged

both management and the union leadership that had denied opportunities to Blacks. DRUM's example spread to other auto plants and to other industries, culminating in the formation of the short-lived Revolutionary Union Movement (1969–1972). Socialist Martin Glaberman pointed out the significance of these developments in an article written shortly after DRUM's founding: "[W]hatever the future course of events what has already happened is of tremendous importance for revolutionary developments in the United States. When talk and action about the white power structure moves from local sheriffs and city administrations to General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, there is not much further to go."[80]

Glaberman's expectations were validated in 1970 when U.S. postal workers, led in many cities by Black workers, mounted an illegal wildcat strike involving 210,000 workers. The postal workers won a 14 percent wage increase, received collective bargaining rights, and forced the reorganization of the postal service—despite the fact that the Nixon administration called up the National Guard to deliver the mail.[81]

These challenges to the bipartisan status quo became even more serious when they were combined with the urban rebellions that "swept across almost every major US city in the Northeast, Middle West and California.... Combining the total weight of socio-economic destruction, the ghetto rebellions from 1964 to 1972 led to 250 deaths, 10,000 serious injuries and 60,000 arrests."[82] The urban rebellions swelled the ranks of the Black Panther Party, leading FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to declare it the "greatest threat to the internal security of the United States." And the 1967 uprising in Detroit clearly influenced the founding of DRUM.[83]

The Democratic establishment responded to this challenge in tried-and-true fashion: with the carrot of reform and the stick of repression. Repression led the way in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings. The federal government, under the Democratic Johnson administration, launched the Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of disruption and repression against radicals, of which the BPP was a top target. In Democratic-dominated Chicago, "...as the [Panthers'] free-meal program expanded throughout the city, feeding hundreds of poor children, mainly through churches, the Chicago police and the FBI grew more intent on quashing them."[84] In December 1969 a joint task force of the Chicago Police and the Cook County (IL) state attorney's office—Democratic

through and through—raided the Black Panther headquarters in Chicago and murdered its key leaders, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

Liberal union leaders confronted the revolutionary union movement with hostility as well. In the first challenge to the UAW hierarchy, DRUM supported a candidate for election to executive board of the Dodge Main local in 1968. UAW president Reuther responded by rigging the election to make sure the DRUM candidate lost and by appointing the first African American to hold the post of regional director in Detroit.[85] The wildcat strikes DRUM inspired continued to challenge UAW-Big Three relations into the early 1970s, when Black militants in plants forged working relationships with white, Arab, and other workers. The firing of a white radical at the Mack Avenue Chrysler plant led to a wildcat strike in August 1973. The union—represented mainly by Chrysler division head Douglas Fraser—worked with the local police to have the instigator arrested and removed from the plant. When workers showed up the next day to protest and to continue the wildcat, "they were confronted by [UAW top officers] Doug Fraser, Irving Bluestone, Emil Mazey and other top UAW executives backed up by a force of nearly 2,000 older or retired UAW loyalists. There was some fighting with local militants, but the sheer size of the union force guaranteed that the strike was over." The police thanked Fraser, remarking that it was great to be on the same side with the union.[86]

In both cases, institutions strongly allied with, or under the direct control of, the Democratic Party were not merely determined to stamp out radicalism for its own sake. They were also aiming to eliminate rivals who challenged the Democrats' political hold on their constituency. The Chicago machine's concern about the BPP's influence has already been noted. In the UAW in the late 1960s, writes historian Kevin Boyle:

> Black workers generally had sought a share of power and a measure of opportunity within a political structure dominated by whites, while both black and white workers had believed that the Democratic Party's liberals best defended both their economic positions and their social values. That identification had been shattered for many workers in the mid-1960s. The UAW's appeals therefore seemed somewhat shopworn in late 1968, more a relic of a fading era than a representation of political reality.[87]

By the 1970s powerful forces were working against Black radicalism. First, as the 1970s wore on, the postwar economic boom slowed. It crashed into recession in 1974–75. As the government cut back on so-

cial spending, reforms became much harder to win. As the movement saw its opportunities to win concrete gains contract, its goals contracted as well. Thus the goal of transforming society from below gave way to the "realism" of the Democratic Party.

Second, as many of the 1960s movement activists looked back to the Democratic Party, an increasing core of middle-class Black politicians arose to offer activists "concrete" and "realistic" roads to reform. These politicians, often using militant-sounding rhetoric, associated "Black Power" with their own electoral success. From 1967 to 1973, Black politicians gained increasing prominence with the elections of mayors Carl Stokes (Cleveland), Richard Hatcher (Gary, IN), Kenneth Gibson (Newark, NJ), Maynard Jackson (Atlanta), Coleman Young (Detroit), and Tom Bradley (Los Angeles). Many activists joined these campaigns.

The 1967 urban rebellions and the prospects of more militant activity prodded the Democratic Party machines, particularly in Northern urban centers, to make concessions to Black sentiment. Radical commentator Robert L. Allen explained in 1969 that "...from the liberal point of view, some concessions must be made if future disruptions such as the 1967 riot are to be avoided." The election of Black politicians would not change the conditions of Black people's lives in their jurisdictions, yet "...Black people were supposed to get the impression that progress was being made, that they were finally being let in the front door.... The intention is to create an impression of real movement while actual movement is too limited to be significant."[88]

The Democratic strategy of co-optation succeeded. Not only did Black electoralism serve its purpose for the predominantly white ruling class—that of demobilizing the Black movement—but it coincided with the interests of Black middle-class politicians and their Black business backers. Between 1964 and 1986, the number of Black elected U.S. officials grew from 103 to 6,424. But at the same time, conditions for the mass of the Black population—workers and the poor—grew increasingly desperate. In fact by the 1980s, a range of indices suggested that living conditions, job opportunities, and poverty levels for Black America were worse than they were before the civil rights movement.[89] Often, Black electoral victories proved hollow. Assuming the reins of cities and counties facing fiscal crisis, Black Democratic politicians were able to deliver little more than austerity to their Black working-class constituents. And in certain circumstances the new Black mayors and officials found themselves in open

conflict with their Black constituents. In 1973 Maynard Jackson, the first Black mayor of Atlanta, found himself winning praise from the business establishment but condemnation from Black supporters for his crushing of a strike by a predominantly Black union of sanitation workers. Only a few months earlier, the sanitation workers union had worked hard for Jackson's election.[90] In an even more ghastly demonstration of these elected officials' fealty to the establishment, Philadelphia mayor Wilson Goode, the first African American to hold that post, ordered a 1985 fire-bombing of an apartment where members of the Black radical group MOVE lived. In addition to incinerating the MOVE apartment, the incendiary device razed an entire city block, leaving eleven MOVE members—including five children—dead and leaving hundreds homeless.[91]

The Graveyard of Social Movements

Following the model of the civil rights movement, other oppressed groups organized themselves to demand respect and recognition of longstanding social claims. The scope of the radicalization of the 1960s and 1970s and the demands for social reforms that it produced had a widespread impact on American society. Women, gays and lesbians, Chicanos, and Native Americans were a few of the oppressed groups who launched new movements to fight for their rights. At the same time, the experience of the anti–Vietnam War movement encouraged other sorts of citizen activism, in which ordinary people organized to pressure the government to respond to demands for addressing environmental degradation or corporate abuse of consumers. Developing during a period of widespread social agitation, these new social movements faced many of the same choices that the civil rights and anti–Vietnam War movements faced. These choices were manifested by divisions within these movements between militant grassroots campaigns and those that were more oriented toward lobbying and electoral activity. The latter group inevitably found itself feeling the gravitational pull of the Democratic Party. A brief consideration of the movements for women's liberation and for gay and lesbian liberation will illustrate this.

From Women's Liberation to Power Feminism

In 1950 approximately 33 percent of women worked outside the home. By 1970 the figure was 44 percent and by 1985, it was nearly 55 percent.[92]

Moreover, with the need for managers and skilled professionals rising, the doors to higher education finally opened to women on a large scale—and middle-class women began to flock to universities across the country. Expectations soared, particularly for middle-class women, that university educations would lead to high-status professional careers. But most of these expectations were unfulfilled; female college graduates entered the corporate world only to find new doors slammed in their faces, as they faced sexist attitudes and limited opportunities for women professionals.

In the midst of the social upheaval of the 1960s, the women's movement began to emerge as middle-class women started to look for a way to raise demands for equal opportunity. To this end, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966. By 1974, NOW's membership totaled more than forty thousand nationally. On college campuses, a more radical version of the women's movement took hold, organized initially by activists from the civil rights and antiwar movements. Consciously imitating the Black Liberation movement, young female students organized around the demand for women's liberation. The new women's liberation groups began meeting in 1967. By 1969, groups had been established in more than forty cities across the United States.

The women's movement never reached the massive size of the civil rights movement. But at times it organized protests that involved many thousands. On August 26, 1970, the women's movement called the Women's Strike for Equality, bringing out more than fifty thousand women to demonstrate for women's rights across the country. These demonstrations also called for free abortion on demand. Literally hundreds of local protests took place between 1969 and 1973 in favor of legal abortion.

But more important than the actual numbers drawn into the movement itself, the ideas of women's liberation found a much larger audience in the population at large. The effects of the women's movement were far-reaching in affecting the consciousness and expectations of millions of women, especially those in the workforce. It brought the issues of equal pay, child care, and abortion rights into the national spotlight. By 1976, a Harris survey reported that 65 percent of American women supported "efforts to strengthen and change women's status in society."[93] The movement reached its high point in 1973 when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion.

Although most of the new women's movement organizations ap-

plauded the legalization of abortion, it was particularly a victory for the more militant wings of the movement. The main women's organization of the day (and of today), deliberately rejected radicalism as an approach to winning equality for women. For much of the late 1960s and the 1970s, NOW's main focus was on passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA was a straightforward amendment guaranteeing "equal rights under the law" for women. During this period of social upheaval, the ERA seemed quite mild and destined to be ratified as a constitutional amendment.

Despite majority support for the ERA across the country, a concerted conservative effort to stop its ratification in the required thirty-eight states by 1982—the ten-year deadline for its ratification—succeeded in burying it. The ERA's fate was clearly tied up with the strength of the women's liberation movement, which peaked around the time the ratification for ERA began. But NOW's strategy of downplaying activism in favor of "respectable" lobbying for pro-ERA politicians contributed to the debacle as well. As the activism in the women's movement dwindled, so did momentum for the passage of ERA. NOW's leaders did not renew a commitment to activism in the face of its losing battles. Instead, as time wore on, NOW's strategies became more conservative in the hopes of winning more friends among state legislators. NOW leaders banned lesbian and radical contingents at pro-ERA marches. NOW president Eleanor Smeal urged lawyers appealing the constitutionality of the federal ban on Medicare funding for abortion not to link their claim to the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause so as not to alienate pro-ERA legislators who were anti-abortion.[94] Increasingly, the nominally nonpartisan NOW shifted its attention to campaigning for pro-ERA and pro-choice politicians, usually Democrats.

At the close of the 1970s, a rapidly growing anti-abortion and conservative movement faced a women's movement that was declining and growing more conservative in its aims and methods. Yet over the course of the Reagan-Bush years, as the women's vote became more important to the Democrats,[95] and women's organizations like NOW and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) devoted more of their resources to electing Democratic candidates, women's rights continued to slide backward. Feminist Martha Burk reviewed the period:

Women in Congress fared no better with their colleagues. During the past twelve years Congress has grown accustomed to trading away the rights of women as bargaining chips in the larger game of "scratch my back" politics. Democratic majorities approved caps on damages for women in the 1991 Civil Rights Act, confirmed the Souter and Thomas nominations to the Supreme Court, agreed to exclude gender from hate-crimes legislation and went along with numerous funding cuts in women's programs. Even though Democrats have held a majority in both houses since 1987, that was not enough to override actual or threatened presidential vetoes on legislation of concern to women. This situation served some armchair feminists well, allowing them to declare their support for women but to plead that their hands were tied. Congressional leaders could also decline to bring legislation to the floor without an assured two-thirds majority, as they did with the Freedom of Choice Act before the 1992 elections—conveniently sparing members a recorded vote.[96]

Despite the disappointing record of the Democratic Clinton administration noted in chapter 3, middle-class feminist organizations like NOW and NARAL (now known as NARAL/Pro-Choice America) became fixtures among Democratic power brokers. But as rank-and-file mobilization organizations they have atrophied. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, NOW-organized demonstrations against GOP-sponsored attacks on abortion rights brought hundreds of thousands to the capitol. Eight years of a nominally pro-choice Democratic administration sapped NOW. It failed to mount a strong, activist campaign against the erosion of abortion rights, which accelerated during the Clinton years. NOW became little more than a Democratic Party caucus, and its active membership declined throughout the 1990s. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, as Democratic politicians had shifted to a position of defending the legality of the general right to abortion while discouraging the exercise of that right—and even supporting "common sense" restrictions to the right to abortion—leading feminist organizations played along. In 2005, when Democratic Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton described abortion as a "tragedy," Eleanor Smeal of the Feminist Majority Foundation found little to criticize: "In many ways, [Clinton] said that if you're interested in reducing the number of abortions, you should be with us."[97]

It was ironic that, a generation after legalized abortion stood as one of the women's movement's main achievements, leading feminists were retreating from its defense. But it was, in part, a reflection of a world view shaped less by the needs of ordinary women than by the needs of Democratic politicians accomodating to a more conservative environment.

Out of the Streets and into Congress

Three days of riots in protest of a June 1969 police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, sparked an upsurge of gay organizing and activism. For this reason, the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion is considered the beginning of the modern gay and lesbian liberation movement. The period immediately after Stonewall spawned the short-lived Gay Liberation Front (GLF), an activist group that saw itself as part of the New Left political movements of the day. One group of activists, concluding that it was more interested in reforming the system than in overthrowing it, split in 1971 to form the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), the first of several gay lobbying organizations and the forerunner of today's Human Rights Campaign (HRC). The remaining GLF radicals divided themselves between "organized leninist [sic] party supporters and the diffused forces of an alternative society," one activist wrote. "This division between what might be termed 'actionists' and 'life-stylers' is clearly evident in the history and theory of the GLF, and its Manifesto."[98]

As the activist movement of the 1970s declined, the lifestyle politics of "personal autonomy" and separatism (between gay men and lesbians, between Black gays and white gays, etc.) took hold of the radical wing of the movement. While some of these politics had a rebirth during the 1980s AIDS crisis in the form of organizations like AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT/UP) and Queer Nation, they proved not to have the organizational staying power as did the more openly reformist wing of the movement, whose first foray into presidential politics came via the 1972 campaign of liberal Democratic Senator George McGovern.

Democratic presidential contender Jimmy Carter subsequently became the first presidential hopeful to declare his support for outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. But Carter began backing away from his rhetorical support for equal rights as soon as he established a clear lead among Democrats and turned to the right in the general election where he wanted to appeal to the "center."[99] During Carter's term, Congress overhauled the federal civil service code but still failed to incorporate ENDA.

To those committed to the Washington insider and lobbying strategy for gay rights, the answer to this failure to win more substantive gains was to elect more pro-gay politicians. For this purpose, a group of liberal gay activists formed the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) in 1980. Unlike other activist organizations, the HRC has never claimed to be anything but a Washington political action committee (PAC) and lobby representing a predominantly affluent constituency. Today, the HRC is one of the top fifty PACs in Washington and its annual black-tie dinner has become a standard stop on the Washington political circuit.[100]

Although officially nonpartisan, HRC has become a virtual satellite of the Democratic Party. However, it doesn't always endorse Democrats. For instance, in 1998, convinced that Republicans would hold the congressional majority for the foreseeable future, the HRC endorsed for reelection Senator Alphonse D'Amato (R-NY), one of the sleaziest and most conservative members of Congress at the time. Despite his consistent 75 percent positive ratings from the Christian Coalition, D'Amato's vote for ENDA was good enough for HRC. In the end, D'Amato lost his election to Representative Charles Schumer, a Democrat.

HRC's willingness to settle for so little with D'Amato was only because it became used to accepting hollow rhetoric from the Clinton administration during the 1990s. On the campaign trail Clinton had pledged to end discrimination against gays in the military. And he became the first presidential candidate to give a major speech on AIDS. The HRC and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) regularly described the Clinton administration as the most "gay friendly" ever. "History will always connect Clinton and the gay and lesbian movement," said NGLTF's former executive director Torrie Osborne. "He has stood up for us when others would not. No matter what happens, we can't forget what he has done for us."[101]

As was noted in chapter 3, exactly what Clinton did for the gay movement was debatable. In the sense that it appointed more openly gay advisers than earlier administrations, Clinton's administration may very well have been "gay friendly." But on issues that mattered to ordinary gays and lesbians, Clinton surrendered. Nevertheless, the major gay lobbying organizations continue to form a major institutional support for Democratic Party candidates. And some Democratic politicians, realizing that popular opinion in the twenty-first century has shifted in a much more gay-friendly direction, are willing to support LGBT issues. But when they do, they have to be careful not to step beyond where the Democratic Party establishment wants them to be, as Democratic San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsome found in 2004 when

he announced that he would grant marriage licenses to gays and lesbians from City Hall. For a brief period in early 2004, Newsome's action electrified activists and prompted thousands to flock to San Francisco to tie the knot. The movement for marriage equality had the potential to spark a movement in defense of elementary gay civil rights. But establishment Democratic politicians, including gay and lesbian ones like Massachusetts representative Barney Frank, drew back, worried that Newsome's action would embolden the right. They particularly feared the prospect of an energized Christian right mobilizing against 2004 Democratic presidential condidate Senator John Kerry. Yet by running scared from the issue of gay marriage, the Democrats and liberals simply helped the right make the argument that there was something wrong about defending equal rights for gay people.

This is not simply an argument by assertion or counterfactual. This actually unfolded on the ground in states that passed antigay initiatives in 2004. In Ohio, the Democrats devoted thousands to lawsuits and lawyers intended—as it turned out, successfully—to keep the independent ticket of Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo off the ballot. Meanwhile activists opposed to Measure One, an initiative barring gay marriage, pleaded with the party for help in challenging the right's petitions. Sarah Wildman, writing in the *American Prospect*, finishes the story:

> It seems self-evident now, but fear of alienating socially conservative Dems kept the party mum. In the trenches, activists felt abandoned. "When we were trying to keep this off the ballot, we were given everything short of... help," says Alan Melamed, who chaired Ohioans Protecting the Constitution, a group that fought the Buckeye State's anti–gay-marriage amendment. A frustrated Melamed laments that the party wanted to "keep [its] hands off" the issue.[102]

Understanding these kinds of dynamics is important because it shows that a failure to challenge right-wing ideas—even in the most tepid way—simply leaves the field open to the right. While the Democrats were refusing to lift a finger to defeat the anti–gay-marriage initiatives, they actively worked to shut down the grassroots activism on behalf of equal marriage that exploded after Newsome began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. So on the issue of gay marriage, as on many others, the mainstream parties closed ranks around similar positions, and the left largely fell behind Kerry, who opposed equal marriage. Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising that conservative politics

won the day. Exit polls showed that 60 percent of the 2004 electorate supported either gay marriage or civil unions for gays and lesbians—a position that was itself considered "controversial" only four years before when the Vermont Supreme Court forced then-Governor Howard Dean to implement civil unions. Yet with few Democratic politicians willing to champion equal marriage rights, this popular sentiment remained largely untapped.

More than three decades after it was introduced, the ENDA has still not been passed. And politicians—as Kerry showed in 2004—are still too timid about standing for equal rights for gays and lesbians despite increasing majorities in favor of them. Surveying the record of the gay alliance with the Democrats from the 1970s to the Clinton administration, former NGLTF Policy Institute Director Urvashi Vaid wrote:

> These meetings did in the 1970s exactly what Bill Clinton's third White House meeting with the gay and lesbian community did in 1993: they demonstrated the administration's symbolic willingness to listen backed by an intransigent refusal to act. The major difference in sixteen years seems to be that we have graduated from meeting with senior staffers to meeting directly with the president. But measured in action, the difference is negligible.[103]

The Democrats and Social Movements

The social movements considered here span more than a century and involve widely disparate constituencies with widely disparate impacts on the society of their times. But one constant unites them: the presence and role of the Democratic Party as the chief national political institution with which they had to contend. The Democratic Party, as the quote from Domhoff at the beginning of this chapter noted, is one of the main conduits through which various "out" groups in U.S. society have been integrated into the mainstream political process. This has had the effect of blunting and co-opting the social movements that were the vehicles by which these out groups had made their voices heard. As leading Populists, labor activists, civil rights activists, and others have learned the hard way over the years, the Democratic Party doesn't simply seek to represent these groups. It seeks to corral them and to ensure that they don't strike out on an independent political path. And rather than championing the demands of the social movements in the broader political system, movement organizations with a Democratic Party ori-

entation often end up making alibis for Democratic politicians or agreeing to trim their sails so as not to alienate their Democratic "friends." In fact it is this quest for friends in high places that today has placed leaders of United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), the largest organization opposing the war in Iraq, in the position of urging support for congressional and presidential candidates (nearly all Democrats), fully admitting that almost none of them is committed to UFPJ's central demand of ending the Iraq War. Although UFPJ calls this "engaging in the 2008 electoral season to project a peace and justice agenda," it has had the effect of fueling a sense of futility in a movement that potentially represents three-quarters of the American population.[104]

It should be stressed that this process doesn't just run one way, with the Democrats co-opting restive movements that resist the Democrats' embrace. In fact there are plenty of constituencies inside social movements that view an orientation toward the Democrats as both logical and necessary. Leaving aside the very real material incentives the Democrats can use to corrupt and buy off social movements, the political rationales for allying with the Democrats have become familiar refrains: "We need politicians who will vote with us, instead of against us." "We can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." "The Democrats depend on us for their elections, so they should listen to us." And always: "The Democrats may not be so great, but they're better than the Republicans."

While these arguments for reform through the Democratic Party sound reasonable, they suffer from a critical flaw at their heart. This "paradox of social democracy," as Robert Brenner has called it, has afflicted every mass movement for social change since the beginnings of mass reformist or social democratic parties in the 1800s. And while the Democratic Party is in no sense a social democratic party, it has often presented itself as the reformist alternative in the mainstream American political system. Brenner explains the paradox:

> On the one hand, [reformism's] rise has depended upon tumultuous mass working-class struggles, the same struggles which have provided the muscle to win major reforms which have provided the basis for the emergence of far left political organizations and ideology.... On the other hand, to the extent that social democracy has been able to consolidate itself organizationally, its core representatives—drawn from the ranks of trade union officials, the parliamentary politicians, and petty bourgeois leaderships of the mass organizations of the oppressed—have invariably sought to implement policies reflecting their own distinctive social positions and interest—positions which are separate

> from and interests which are, in fundamental ways, opposed to those of the working class.
>
> .... The paradoxical consequence has been that, to the extent that the official representatives of reformism...have been freed to implement their characteristic worldviews, strategies, and tactics, they have systematically undermined the basis for their own continuing existence, paving the way for their dissolution.[105]

In other words, the power that social movements exert—through protests, strikes, and disruption of business as usual—is what forces the political establishment to address their demands and to recognize their leaders. This has been the case historically whether Democrats or Republicans occupy the White House, despite the fact that the Democrats have promoted themselves as the party that represents the interests of workers and the oppressed. But as this chapter has shown, the Democratic Party expects movement leaders to rein in their movements, thereby undercutting the potential for struggle from below. That is the deal with the devil that any movement activist makes when entering into an alliance with the Democratic Party, whose institutional loyalties lie with its corporate funders—not its working-class and movement supporters.

Peter Miguel Camejo, who joined Ralph Nader on an independent left-wing presidential ticket running against Kerry and Bush in 2004, understood this well:

> One important value of the Democratic Party to the corporate world is that it makes the Republican Party possible through the maintenance of the stability that is essential for "business as usual." It does this by preventing a genuine mass opposition from developing. Together the two parties offer one of the best frameworks possible with which to rule a people that otherwise would begin to move society toward the rule of the people (i.e., democracy).[106]

If the Democrats and Republicans have this relationship in domestic politics, their bipartisan modus operandi is even more pronounced in their joint conduct of U.S. foreign policy, to which we turn in the next chapter.