

The Proposal

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THE NEED FOR A THIRD PARTY

PREFACE:

It could be seen as an open question whether the sun skirting the horizon in the Obama campaign logo is rising or setting. The convexity of the horizon was designed to indicate a rising sun, thus implicitly appropriating Ronald Reagan's eminently effective campaign theme: *Morning in America*.

Hope, optimism, national pride, making people *feel* good: this all works wonderfully well for rallying crowds. But now the Progressives who backed Obama in 2008 must wonder: Did Obama's ascendancy prove to be a new dawn for the country, or was that sun in his logo merely the harbinger of a sunset for something else? And if it really was a *setting* sun after all: the sunset of *what*?

The verdict may well depend on the emergence of a new movement—one that ushers in the dawn of a truly civil society—and thus the dusk of a defunct right-wing order. Currently, we have a right-wing order that is enabled by two right-wing parties that—in the current electoral scenario—exhaust all voting options.

Was that sun in Obama's logo rising or setting? Like the engraving of a sun skirting the horizon on the back of George Washington's chair during the Constitutional Convention, only time will tell which will be the case. We should remind ourselves that it's up to The People, not the politicians, what will happen.

It may well be that a new day in America is possible. But that day can only be inaugurated by the daybreak of a new kind of political party. For a new day requires far more than a snazzy logo. The APPEARANCE of a rising sun isn't enough. We actually have to bring about the new day ourselves. That may entail the sunset of the Democratic Party.

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INTRODUCTION:

This essay could just as easily have been titled, "The Need for a Second Party"; but that may have confused readers. It may have been labeled either way because the choice of titles depends on whether we consider the G.O.P. and the Democratic Party two entirely separate political parties...or simply two factions of a single, monolithic Business Party. (In the second taxonomy, one faction is right-wing, the other is *ultra*-right-wing.)

The difficulty of titling this essay goes straight to the point of the essay. Currently, we have a paucity of choices in political elections. One party is an ultra-right-wing cult; the other is a hodge-podge collection of various factions—most of which lean palpably rightward. The G.O.P. is a reactionary cult; the DP is a loose coalition of caucuses pandering to various constituencies.

The G.O.P. operates in lockstep because the Republican Machine has little tolerance for heresy. Its jingoism and reactionary mindset operate like a highly disciplined clique—keeping everyone “in line” with the anointed doctrine.

By contrast, the DP, being a collection of factions, may—sometimes—caucus together, when it’s convenient. The DP might unify IF the centrist factions capitulate to the right-most factions. (The factions of which the party is comprised almost never caucus together by aligning with the more progressive facets; it is almost always the progressive facets that must cede ground in order to form a party-wide caucus.)

Bottom line: When a nation has a bold *ultra*-right-wing political party, having a gutless *moderate* right party as the only viable alternative doesn’t give people much to work with. When the Overton Window is shifted so far to the right, anything that is politically centrist appears decidedly LEFT. This skewed purview distorts our political taxonomy, thereby misleading us about the reasonable-ness of Progressive policies.

Meanwhile, the rightward shift makes significantly right-leaning policies seem positively “centrist”. Of course, common sense tells us that taking a *radical* right-wing platform and a *moderate* right-wing platform, then simply splitting the difference, does not yield a true center. Rather, it yields a half-assed compromise under the aegis of “bi-partisanship”. Such “realism” is a cop-out.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE CURRENT TWO PARTY SYSTEM:

“However [political parties] may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.” — George Washington, Farewell Address

Presently, the citizenry is divided into two “camps” (two “sides” in a fabricated Manichean saga). Thus, we have two groups of loyal supporters, pitted against each other in a struggle that defines our ENTIRE NARRATIVE. All public discourse is, by default, couched in terms of this epic feud between the designated camps. Most people, then, by default, end up affiliating themselves with whatever schemes their respective party bosses prescribe. Fealty to the party dictates the nature and scope of one’s participation in civic life. Being a loyal supporter of one or the other camp establishes the terms in which one will think about any issue.

The unbridled hubris of the moneyed interests is thereby allowed free reign to conduct “public policy” as they see fit. As far as self-proclaimed “moderates” are concerned, taking two bad answers (one off-base, the other utterly preposterous) and simply splitting the difference, is deemed “pragmatic”. Such an approach, however, is woefully inadequate.

Such shameless pragmatism requires abandoning all rectitude, and resigning oneself to a pre-destined, chronic middle-of-the-road-ism. This is half-assed political engagement (not to mention, intellectual cowardice). Thus, “bi-partisan” is championed as a praiseworthy virtue to be emulated. Yet...it is merely a euphemism for someone with no backbone who maneuvers between two goalposts—*wherever they happen to be*. This is opportunistic resignation disguised as a noble tribute to political realism. That is to say: It is opportunism, not responsible civic participation. It is an ersatz virtue that must be denounced.

To understand the institutional structure that under-girds our benighted political culture, we need only note the modus operandi of our two party system. The sclerotic political discourse it gives us is riddled with false dichotomies (i.e. false choices) and myopic, cookie-cutter perspectives.

The fact of the matter is this: Most Progressives currently vote *for* the DP in order to vote *against* the G.O.P. That is, the DP is supported as a means to prevent the alternative, the G.O.P. from seizing too much power. This is a sorry state of affairs, as it is based merely on stymieing the machinations of the ultra-right wing by displacing it with a more moderate right-wing group of politicians. The DP is, thus, the de facto “go to” party for Progressives seeking to mitigate the destructive power of the far, far right. The result of this fiasco is plain to see: Progressives devote their time to *preventing* damage instead of *promoting* substantive progress. They essentially promote a LESS-right-wing alternative in order to preclude a MORE-right-wing outcome. The DP is, then, little other than a DISPLACEMENT Party: a hodge-podge of disparate caucuses that each serves as “other” on ballots where the only other choice is *ultra-right-wing*.

“Reader, pretend you are an idiot. Or pretend you are a member of congress. But, wait, I repeat myself.” These words from Mark Twain resonate today. The G.O.P. has become a mover of the Overton Window ever more to the right simply because it isn’t required to contend with a genuine opposition party. It moves the Overton Window rightward with impunity—even as the Democratic Party has allowed itself to be a slave to the Overton Window’s perpetual shift. The DP is subordinate to the positioning of the political spectrum simply because it allows itself to be defined as “the party slightly to the left of wherever the Republican Party puts itself”. This plays magnificently well into the hands of the ultra-right faction of the G.O.P.

Democrats know only the politics of capitulation, willingly following the Republicans toward a frightening place to the right horizon of the political spectrum. They have become reactionaries to the reactionaries. The Senate, nothing more than a millionaires club, is a hive of graft: the hub of American corporatism. The House of Representatives is comprised of moral prostitutes, obstinate ideologues, and blithering dunces—a body of clowns that are allowed to operate with impunity simply because there is nobody there with sufficient voice to point out why they are clowns.

Finally, the current 2-party system is woefully dysfunctional because it is based on:

- An electoral college
- Either / or voting
- Plurality-wins instead of majority-wins elections

The way to remedy this is to eliminate the electoral college, institute some kind of “rankings” vote (e.g. instant run-off), and thus ensure that only a candidate with majority support—from any of X number of viable parties—can be elected. All these *logistical* (election) reforms are independent of *campaign finance* reform.

Any Progressive who has the audacity to speak out against the DP is chastised and harangued for being overly idealistic, unrealistic, and un-pragmatic. Such Progressives are demeaned (and thus dismissed) as quixotic whiners who “don’t get” the system. They are summarily notified that they need to quite their bitchin’ or “you’ll just hurt the DP and thereby abet the Republicans!” So Progressives who criticize the DP from the “left” are told to shut up and play along, or they risk “splitting” the anti-right-wing vote, thereby allowing a minority-yet-plurality *from the right* to win.

Progressives, then, need to keep their mouths shut, and support the DP lest they sabotage the chances for the DP to displace the G.O.P. The DP is consequently left in a position of chronic capitulation to the ultra-right in order to get anything done. Progressives are left with such sublime alternatives as: support corporatists *moderately* or support corporatists *completely*.

This ridiculous charade continues, ad infinitum.

THE DIAGNOSIS:

Nowadays, the DP has an especially privileged position. Being the lesser right of two right-wing alternatives means that anyone to the left of *ultra-right* is compelled to support them by default (thus endorsing them as the least bad alternative). Moreover, whenever the DP capitulates to the G.O.P., it can always say, “It could have been worse; see how wonderful we are—being slightly to the left of the Republicans! Besides, who else are you going to vote for? We’ll engage in corporatism a tad-bit less egregiously than the Republicans, and you’ll thank us for the generous gesture.”

Alas, *kinda bad* seems relatively palatable when juxtaposed against *downright awful*. When Obama surrounds himself with the likes of Rahm Emanuel (now William Daley) as his chief political advisor and financial sector darling Timothy Geithner as chief economic adviser, he is clearly right-wing. The first years of the Obama administration have proven that all the corporate and banking interests’ investment in Obama have paid off handsomely.

Contrary to the popular belief that Obama’s campaign was financed largely by small donations from grassroots supporters, Obama actually raked in more money from large companies—especially finance companies and banks—than did his Republican rival. In spite of its image as “the party of the people”, the DP is just as beholden to corporate interests as the G.O.P. Once again, in 2008, we were reminded that corporations don’t so much buy elections as buy off candidates.

Millions of non-wealthy black people—especially—flocked to vote for Obama in the hopes that finally there would be someone in high public office that may go out of his way to help

them—yet after more than two years in power, he’s done almost nothing to help poor people. This has gone largely un-noticed by well-off white folk. While the G.O.P. works directly for corporate power, Obama merely acquiesces to it, kow-towing to most demands they make. Obama’s iota-of-change has done nothing toward structural change. Indeed, the bar had been set so abysmally low with G.W. Bush that Obama appears positively spectacular. When contrasted with the Republican alternative, he seems utterly brilliant. (Plus, he had a VERY cool logo.)

Pursuant to their hero’s election, Obama-maniacs were too busy congratulating themselves to engage in an honest, critical analysis of the man behind the brand-name—of the actions behind the lip-service. We were given the impression that hope (and trust) may well be enough—and then shown that hope alone does very little. Instead of being a wholly-owned subsidiary of corporate America like the right wing, the DP is merely a compliant servant—a servant to Big Business that offers words of protest even as it consistently submits. The difference between the G.O.P. and the DP is more in the words than in the actions. While the G.O.P. *eagerly* serves plutocracy, the DP feigns to do it grudgingly—and slightly less egregiously.

The current electoral logistics are quite plain to see. Whenever the Democrats capitulate with the Republicans, the non-Republican segment of the citizenry can’t hold it against them, because there is no *more progressive alternative*. So Progressives are forced to bite the bullet. “Grin and bear it,” Progressives are told year after year, “It could be worse.” The DP need only stay slightly to the left of the G.O.P. (no matter how far right the G.O.P. may be), and then demand that we all thank it for being a less-rightward alternative. No matter how far to the right the DP is from progressive ideals, it is always going to be the de facto “winner”. This is a moral hazard if there ever was one.

Meanwhile, the G.O.P. can look somewhat credible, as they end up merely being the party that is *slightly to the right* of the DP. Once the DP is stigmatized as the “liberal” or “left” alternative, the illusion of a perfectly reasonable balance is provided. No matter how far to the right the Overton Window shifts, this illusion can be maintained. Thus, the ultra-right-wing can appear rather reasonable, and sustain a veneer of credibility. After all, they’re just slightly to the right of the DP, so how bad could they be?

Other contrasts between the two current parties are illustrative. The G.O.P. is a backward-looking party while the DP is stuck in the present—with little foresight. A forward-looking party, then, isn’t even in the cards. Constantly, Progressives are told, “Hey, it could have been a lot worse. The DP was at least able to mitigate the degree to which the right-wing policies were disastrous. So you should be thankful. Shut up and appreciate the DP or else it won’t be able to sustain its right-wing-mitigation role.” The role of the Progressive, then, is to settle for relatively dysfunctional instead of outright disastrous...and be happy for the privilege of staunching the bleeding.

The DP and the G.O.P. share many of the same heresies: enacting robust ROTA for the financial sector and for large corporations, making bold cuts to the military industrial complex, saying that there is nothing immoral about abortion, speaking out against guns, criticizing the appalling policies of the IG in Palestine, openly acknowledging that universal public healthcare is a moral and economic imperative, etc. etc. Those in the DP are scared to take a bold stand on such things because they are quite literally frightened by the G.O.P. They don't want a real debate over such issues. So long as Progressives continue to be suckers for the current charade, substantial progress becomes an intractable task. All the while, the DP will point to that intractability to rationalize its approach, when it is their approach that entails that intractability.

Within the DP choreography, it would be unheard of for someone to stand up and tell a Republican, "You are wrong." This would be too contentious for the DP playbook. So, we never hear the obvious truths that need to be told: "Supply-side economics doesn't work. Trickle-down economics is a fiction. Public investment has a higher fiscal multiplier than tax-breaks for the super-rich. If you say otherwise, *you are lying*." Such declarations would be deemed uncouth, a breach of etiquette, or just a tad-bit too harsh. That the declaration is TRUE would be beside the point: the DP is supposed to "play nice" with the corporatists. So, since the 70's, the G.O.P. can walk all over the DP, knowing the DP will ultimately cave in. The Republicans want to privatize everything under the sun, and run the State like a business—and the DP can't seem to articulate what's wrong with that. What it does well, though, is lay down and apologize to the far-right for being too far to the "left".

Since Carter, the sequence of events repeats itself as if a scripted ritual:

1. The G.O.P. announces its latest bold agenda—with great fanfare, super-patriotic zeal, and flag-waving.
2. The DP feigns astonishment, then begs the G.O.P. to "please, sir, have a little mercy on us." Groveling, Democratic leaders timidly request that Republican leaders consider a less-extreme-right-wing approach.
3. For their treasonous intransigence, the DP is accused of being anti-American, "communist", "socialist", etc.
4. The DP apologizes for being too bold in its requests (and for being insufficiently patriotic). Democrats promptly adopt right-wing rhetoric, articulate their own platform in right-wing terms, then beseech the G.O.P. not to demand *too* much.
5. For daring to STILL not completely obey the Republican Machine's demands, the G.O.P. accuses the DP of seeking to deprive people of freedom—and even of advocating tyranny.
6. The DP apologizes for being "radical". It promptly capitulates to G.O.P. demands (in the name of "compromise"), patting itself on the back for being so wonderfully conciliatory.
7. The G.O.P. demands *additional* capitulation.
8. The DP briefly feigns reticence to comply, then capitulates *even more* (in the name of "pragmatism" and "bipartisanship") while taking care to mock principled "leftists" (for being "unrealistic" and "not understanding how Washington works"). The complete capitulation is thus passed off as a sage exercise in political practicality.
9. Marginally diluted from its most extreme form, the right-wing agenda is successfully implemented.
10. The DP declares victory.
11. Progressives throw their arms up in exasperation, then console themselves with: "Well, I guess it could have been worse. At least we made a small dent. Good thing we stood by the DP, lest the policies would have been *even further*

to the right.”

12. Go back to 1 and repeat, ad infinitum.

With each iteration of this standard routine, the same thing happens. The rank and file simply shrug their shoulders and say, “Well, at least the DP isn’t *overtly against* us the way the corporatists are. So we shouldn’t complain *too* much. After all, the G.O.P. didn’t *completely* get its way. Thank you, DP, for trying.” (Meanwhile, Progressives are berated by DP leaders for being “overly-idealistic” and chastised for expecting too much from an inherently flawed political system.)

This is contemporary American politics in a nutshell. Sound bad? Well, it gets even worse. The routine continues...

Right-wing policies cause many serious problems: economic catastrophes like the stock market crash of 1929; the S&L debacle of the late 80’s; the Long-Term Capital Management scandal of the late 90’s; the scandals at Enron, Worldcom, Global Crossing, etc. in 2001-02; and the economic disaster of 2008...not to mention the national debt, ridiculous wealth inequalities, and widespread disenfranchisement / unemployment of the rank and file. The right wing creates every one of these problems and THEN BLAMES THE DEMOCRATS for it. How can the plutocrats possibly get away with this? Easy. There’s no real opposition party to speak of—so there’s no opposition party to speak up.

The way it works is quite simple: When the DP capitulates, it isn’t able to adequately enact progressive (i.e. healthy) policies, thereby enabling dysfunction to metastasize. During the fallout, the right wing can then turn around and proclaim: “Look! See what happens when we don’t *completely* get our way?” The DP allows corporatists to pull off this stunt with impunity.

The right wing employed this ruse regarding regressive taxation policy, rampant deregulation, the gutting of public infrastructure, and the de-funding of vital social services: all things that cause egregious problems... problems that would inevitably be blamed on the impotent DP. Why does this ploy work? The DP went along with the scheme *with only minor protest*, thereby enabling the right-wing to do damage. It can be made to appear to the untutored and credulous that it was the minor actions of the DP that screwed everything up. The right wing can cry “foul”, and perpetrate the sham. From defenders of the plutocracy, we still hear that supply-side economics is the only answer—as if that approach has ever—even once—worked.

In reality, Keynesian policy has *consistently worked* (insofar as it’s been implemented) while Neoliberal policy has *always proved disastrous* (insofar as it’s been implemented). Yet we’re constantly told by the G.O.P. that Keynesian policy has *never* worked... while Neoliberal policy has always turned out splendidly for everyone.

Plutocrats would have everyone believe that supply-side economics is the solution while demand-side economics is tantamount to Soviet-style Communism. Here’s the catch: The DP has NEVER corrected them on this. Not once has the DP ever taken a firm stand, and notified the country that it is DEMAND-side policies that *work* and SUPPLY-side policies that have *never* worked. Instead, people hear unfounded claims that ROTA kills the economy and that the solution to all that ails us is to privatize everything under the sun. These are not mere myths; these are utterly preposterous statements.

For anyone familiar with history and with macro-economics, it is clear that right-wing economic policy has caused all of the nation’s economic problems for the past three decades. ~~Yet right-wing ideologues adamantly insist that all those problems can be blamed on progressive~~

economic policy. So the question arises: How could so much of the electorate be so easily duped?

When there is no clear alternative to right-wing policy, people aren't able to see how / why right-wing policy is so horrendous. When Obama's stimulus didn't work well enough in 2009-11 (because it wasn't nearly big enough), the right wing could point to it and simply declare: "A-ha! Behold: it didn't work!" Even though it was clearly *right-wing* policies that created the disaster in the first place, the corporatists could turn around and blame the nation's economic problems on the DP.

It's diabolical; it's devious; it's deceptive; it's standard operating procedure. The DP plays into this scheme at every turn. A bold political party would never allow itself to be played so severely.

THE APPEAL OF BOLD VISION:

Unsurprisingly, the G.O.P. has cornered the market on bold vision. By contrast, the DP is a group of loosely affiliated caucuses—each comprised of high-talking yet ultimately timid careerists vying for a piece of the action. It is tragic that the only politicians with the fortitude to stand their ground are those who are furthest to the right. It is no wonder that we're in the mess we're in: A *Progressive* with fortitude is dubbed "impractical" while a Corporatist with fortitude is praised as "principled", "courageous", and "bold". Rectitude is berated as "idealism", while savvy opportunism is lionized.

It is no exaggeration to say that the present DP is merely watered-down Republicanism. This is not only the case in terms of substance, but in terms of fortitude. During his 2008 campaign, the Obama camp employed the buzz term "*change*" ad nauseum. It sounded magnificently noble—and even quite profound—and made for a catchy bumper sticker. What Obama didn't divulge, however, was that the implied promise meant "*trivial change*". Ultimately, he had in mind nothing more than some tweaking around the edges. (Obama's second book would have been more accurately titled, "The Hope For Audacity".)

The alluring invocation of "hope" involved a plan for minor adjustments here and there—while leaving the underlying structural defects fully in tact. What many didn't realize (especially those who were swept up in Obama-mania) was a simple fact: *hope is not enough*. Hope itself accomplishes nothing. Obama, it turned out, was just as susceptible to the lures of corporatism as the next politician.

Instead of appointing bold visionary Elizabeth Warren to a consumer protection position, Obama refused—even as he requested that charlatan Rick Warren be part of his inauguration ceremony. Instead of prosecuting Clarence Thomas for breaching important "conflicts of interest" rules for Supreme Court justices, and disbaring him, the Executive Branch under Obama did absolutely nothing. Instead of joining the rest of the planet Earth in condemning the illegal settlement activity and the continued brutal occupation in Palestine, Obama refused to push for a vote that would actually *do anything*. He has proven himself to be a shill for the military-industrial complex, the financial services industry, and PhARMA.

Meanwhile, Obama refuses to call for a curb corporate socialism (hand-outs to Big Business, including massive tax-exemptions and gigantic subsidies). He appoints banking

sweetheart Tim Geithner to be his secretary of Treasury, as well as corporatists Rahm Emanuel and then William Daley to be his chief of staff.

In 2011, news that GE made \$14 billion in profits in 2010 yet paid ZERO dollars in federal taxes didn't stop Obama from naming CEO Jeff Immelt to be chairman of his "Council on Jobs and Competitiveness". Funny what happens when one's professed principles encounter actual circumstances—what one will do for convenience. At every juncture, Obama is careful to do what is good for his career—and pragmatism trumps rectitude each step of the way. That his deeds are less egregious than the deeds of Republicans is little solace. He seeks to appease the Machine at every opportunity.

One can't help but wonder: What on earth is going on here? The DP seems to always act in its own best interest, just as the G.O.P.—a wholly owned subsidiary of corporate power—always acts in the best interest of the plutocrats that run it. The CSP must be different—a vehicle for genuine public service, not for careerist politicians concerned with the next useful political maneuver. Useful for who? Useful for those making the decisions.

After the election, when Obama surrounded himself with right-wing policy makers, the DP was revealed for what it really was: G.O.P. lite.

Actions speak louder than words. The DP's lip-service has grown tired and hollow. A genuine progressive party's slogan would be "More than just hope; *action*". It would issue brazen calls for "*structural* change". It would not be a party designed merely for applause lines and campaign slogans. It would not be about feel-good politics; it would be about Reality-based politics. After all, "the system" works how the People MAKE it work. Plutocrats can only succeed with the People's acquiescence. The CSP will be the means by which the People can operate the Machine—instead of submitting to it.

The DP uses the Machine as an excuse, instead of working to change it. The DP continues to be the fall-back alternative for anyone who is not ultra-right-wing. We can do so much better. What are we waiting for?

THE PROPOSAL:

The DP is predicated on the assumption that the only way to operate is to get the ultra-right-wing (notably, corporatists) to cooperate with it, and thereby serve general welfare (i.e. the interests of the rank and file). The DP seems not to realize: corporatists will NEVER cooperate with the rank and file (corporatism is inherently antithetical to concerns for the general welfare).

A genuinely progressive party would need an entirely different m.o. It would proceed from the recognition that the ultra-right (specifically, corporatists) *will never cooperate with efforts for social democracy*. **So it won't waste its time courting them for cooperation.** Instead, this new party would devote its time and energy to showing the rank and file that social democracy can only be realized by ceasing to capitulate to the corporatist agenda.

If someone is hell-bent on fettering social democracy out of ignorance, the new party will seek to educate them. However, for those who are hell-bent on fettering social democracy NOT out of ignorance, but out of avarice, then this new party will have nothing to do with them, and have only one thing to say: “Get out of our way.” Only in this way can the marginalizers be marginalized.

A preliminary proposal for a third (i.e. second) political party, *a genuinely progressive party*, would resemble the following.

First, the name of the party:

Progressivism is a frame of mind, not an institution. Therefore, labeling a progressive political party “The Progressive Party” would be inappropriate. (The same could be said for *humanism* or for *probity*—not qualities defined by an official membership.) To be a progressive isn’t to be a member of a certain tribe or affiliated with a certain institution; it is to have a certain set of principles and values.

A genuinely progressive party would be dedicated to *social justice*, and work towards genuine *social democracy*; so it could be called the **S.J.P.** (Social Justice Party) or the **S.D.P.** (Social Democracy Party). However, sadly, a political party named for “social” anything would invite stigmas of “social-ism” or “social-ist”, regardless of the actual meaning of the above terms. Moreover, many iniquitous movements in modern history have appropriated noble-sounding labels that resemble these words. So such titles—though appropriate—would simply invite precarious P.R. snafus.

What we’re ultimately talking about is a party that advocates for *civil society*. So the Civil Society Party would be suitable. So, without further ado, introducing **The CSP**.

The CSP would be a party of, by, and for Progressives—the first one since Teddy Roosevelt. It would not be a “default” party for Progressives, as the DP currently is. It would not be the “least bad” alternative of two bad alternatives. It would not be right-wing, as are the two current major parties. Most importantly, it would be a party designed to serve democracy, not money and power. That is to say, it would operate to serve the general populace, not narrow sectors of privilege.

The CSP wouldn’t be ideological, yet it would take bold stands against the Machine in ways that the DP rarely has—and rarely can—due to the basis of its existence. Its platform would be based on the principles of humanism. Its mission would be to fight for the conditions requisite for civil society—namely, civil rights and universal enfranchisement. Its approach would be based on a cosmopolitan worldview. This would involve advocacy for social justice.

The CSP would push for Participatory, Deliberative Democracy—something that we currently don’t have here in the U.S. It would dedicate itself to eliminating *structural inequality*. It would fight against systems of exploitation, domination, and marginalization. It would actually strive to DO SOMETHING.

Currently, Progressives are homeless. Sporadically, there is a phenomenon in congress called the Congressional Progressive Caucus. The CPC is forced to reside within the DP, thereby all but neutering it. Progressives deserve more than a transient caucus. Civil society deserves better. And the noble statesmen who participate in the CPC deserve a political party

that will honor them—that will empower them to actually *do something*.

Let's review some basic facts about the Obama administration:

- At the behest of the banking lobby and his buddies in the financial services industry, the DP has allowed desperately needed financial reform (enactment of obvious ROTA measures) to be *completely eviscerated* by corporatists...thereby completely capitulating to the demands of The Chamber of Commerce, The Business Roundtable, The Financial Services Roundtable, The Club For Growth, the ABA, etc. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was an obvious solution proposed by Elizabeth Warren—a woman that has been shunned, as opposed to championed, by the Obama administration.
- It allowed desperately needed healthcare reform (with perfectly reasonable measures to help the rank and file) to be *completely gutted* by the FPSTI (per the demands of AHIP, AMA, PhARMA, etc.)
- It allowed the economic stimulus to be whittled down to something far, far too small (per the demands of deficit hawks, the AEI, et. al.) The stimulus package *worked perfectly* as far as it went; the problem is that it was woefully inadequate. It fell short *due to being far too small*.
- It has allowed the IG to continue its despicable conduct in Palestine (at the behest of AIPAC)
- It hasn't done anything to cut the obscenely bloated military budget, or address the egregious problems of the military-industrial complex, or to counteract the ridiculous posture of militarism and American Exceptionalism, or to end the fraudulent "Long War" on "terrorism", or to address the climate of super-patriotism that has afflicted the country for the last three decades (at the behest of military contractors, the Heritage Foundation, et. al.)
- It has done nothing to fight the rampant corporatism infecting the U.S. government, thus doing nothing to address the gigantic corporate tax loopholes, pointless subsidies to Big Business (most notably, agri-business and oil companies), and the on-going corporate socialism that siphons public funds into the coffers of large corporations
- Preposterously, it has continued the utterly needless and stupendously harmful Bush tax-breaks for Big Business and for the super-rich (at the behest of Grover Norquist)
- It has cow-towed to the demands of Tea Partiers and anarcho-capitalist ideologues, cutting vital social services and de-funded public works in order to fund MORE tax-breaks for the super-rich

Any one of these—alone—would be inexcusable. That the Obama administration is guilty of *every one* is appalling—and corroboration that the DP is a *right-wing* party. How many times does a political party need to give the ultra-far-right 90% of what it demands before we stop calling it a party for Progressives?

All the above cave-ins have been rationalized with a simple line: "It could have been worse!" This is now the standard by which Progressives acquiesce to the DP's chronic capitulation to the ultra-right-wing—in the name of "pragmatism". Those who ask for reasonable amount of Progressivism are told to quit whining and to be more realistic. Alas, routine capitulation—under the aegis of "compromise"—is no way to operate a political party. The DP is all lip-service, no rectitude.

That the few remaining stalwarts of probity are forced to work with the likes of Rahm Emanuel and Tim Geithner is an insult to each one of them. It debauches their noble efforts at public service. We have learned that if we want social justice, the DP will not deliver. The best public servants—nay, *the only*

public servants—belong in a party that actually fights for the public good: for civil rights, for organized labor, for Keynesian principles (demand-side economic policy and economic justice), for the disenfranchised, and *against corporatism*.

Progressivism is not corporatism lite. The DP is corporatism lite. To put it mildly, these two facts are a problem if all that Progressives depend on is the DP. Corporatism will persist so long as there is no *well-organized project* to impede it. Corporatists will push their agenda with impunity unless there is an efficient, effective means for civilians to counteract plutocratic machinations.

Such collaboration can only be effected by way of a social mechanism. The CSP is about participating in a coordinated effort. It is not a “club” that one joins; it’s a process of which everyone can be a part.

This is not about “taking sides”; it’s about citizens doing the right thing. It is not about becoming a member of an anointed tribe; it’s about concerned civilians working together to make good things happen. The CSP is simply a way for people to—finally—actively partake in the democratic process.

The CSP will be for social justice. Thus, it will be the party of gender equality and racial equality, of civil rights here at home and human rights abroad, of environmentalism and sustainable development. It will promote multiculturalism (but not cultural relativism), Keynesian economics (but not absolute socialism), and national dignity (but not super-patriotism). It will be based on humanism (not ideology) and on cosmopolitanism (not national chauvinism). The CSP will be a place Progressives can call home.

A NEW M.O.:

This would not be a one-time, single-issue campaign for a small group of people; it would be a long-term, society-wide movement. It would not be based on paying homage to platitudes and lofty rhetoric; it would be about actually making things happen.

The DP is based largely on wonderful-sounding lip service. When Obama promised “change you can believe in” during his 2008 campaign, he meant it: he offered promises for change *that people would be inspired by*. The CSP would offer something different: change *that will actually happen*.

“Believing in” something isn’t enough. People actually have to do something to make it happen. In the meantime, non-corporatists are just *talking about* positive changes while not actually accomplishing much...then offering rationalizations for such delinquency involving “baby steps”.

It’s key to note that taking a bold stand doesn’t mean that some compromise isn’t in order. After all, democracy runs on *certain kinds* of compromise; it’s how the U.S. Constitution itself was composed. Refusing to capitulate to the far right (*as a matter of protocol*, like the DP) doesn’t mean that compromise per se is categorically off the table. The catch is that healthy compromise happens within boundary conditions. The DP has no steadfast boundary conditions for compromise; ergo its endlessly amorphous nature. The CSP will know where to draw the line—lines that will define the CSP very clearly. No party can offer certainty about what will

actually happen, but a party can offer certainty about the specific things it will fight for.

If a man is beating his wife four hours per day, and we say that he shouldn't beat his wife at all, it is not noble to compromise, simply say, "Ok, beat your wife two hours per day," pat yourself on the back for being bi-partisan, and call it a day. Wife-beating is *categorically* wrong, so *less* wife-beating is still unacceptable.

However, once the abuse stops, we may surmise that four hours of counseling per week is in order for the dysfunctional husband, while others insist that no counseling is necessary. The appropriate degree of counseling needed involves a legitimate debate. Here, compromise may make sense: Two hours of counseling per week isn't ideal, but it is far better than none.

Supply-side economics *doesn't work*. If you disagree with this, you are wrong. There is no "compromise" with that documented fact. However, proposing a top marginal tax-rate of 90% versus 10% demanded by corporatists may warrant settling on a compromise of 50%. This may not be ideal, but it doesn't enable iniquity to prevail. If you say supply-side economics works, *you're wrong*. (You're either ignorant, or you're lying.) Meanwhile, if you think the prudent top marginal tax rate should be X instead of Y, we can have an honest debate. The key with democracy is knowing where there can (and should) be legitimate debate, and where the jury is no longer out.

Homosexuality isn't immoral. Period. Trickle-down economics is a hoax. Highly concentrated private power is antithetical to a genuinely democratic society. UPH is a pre-requisite for social democracy. There is nothing immoral about abortion. What the Pentagon did in Vietnam and Iraq was morally reprehensible. There are certain things where "compromise" is a moot point. Reality is reality. Morality is morality. To fail to recognize it as such isn't a matter of "compromise"; it's being disingenuous...or ignorant. It is the responsibility of every person to point this out.

There are legitimate disagreements on important matters. These disagreements are healthy for democracy, and keep all views subject to critical analysis. The democratic process thrives on such debate. A vibrant public discourse is comprised of this on-going, free inquiry. The country needs a party that does not conduct itself as a *powerless bystander* of Machine politics, kow-towing to the right wing; it needs a party that will be *the shaper* of America's political course. In order to effect change, Progressives need a party that has backbone—that is willing to take a stand even when it is "inconvenient". With the CSP, Progressives will no longer be mocked for being "unrealistic". The role of a worthwhile party is to actively determine what is politically possible: the G.O.P. knows this all too well.

By contrast, there are differences of position on facts, where one party is objectively right and the other is objectively wrong. Democracy can't work unless such discernment prevails—for democracy is predicated on a well-informed citizenry. The duty of the former party is to be a pedagogue for the citizenry (to help people understand); the duty of the latter is to be a demagogue to the citizenry (to persuade people to follow). The distinction between these two roles is fundamental: It involves the difference between erudition and dogmatism, education and indoctrination, learning facts and being duped by propaganda, fostering edification and promulgating ideology. The DP has been delinquent in its responsibility to be a pedagogue—thereby allowing the right wing unfettered ability to dupe tens of millions into going along with its egregiously dysfunctional agenda.

The CSP would allow no such thing.

IMAGINE...

If there were ever a CSP president, he would most likely begin his first State of the Union Address by first not addressing the American People, but exclusively the Congressmen and Senators before him in the room:

“Most of you are bought. Most of you have proven yourselves incapable of substantive reform because of this fact. Most of you have defaulted on your duty to promote the General Welfare—as stipulated in the Preamble of our Constitution—because you *depend on your* biggest donors—and are thereby forced to appease your biggest donors by serving THEIR interests, and their interests alone. This needs to stop now.

“Money is not speech. Corporations are not human beings. We do not live in a plutocracy; we live in a representative democracy. So we need to stop conducting ourselves as a plutocracy. I will not work with a bought Congress. I refuse to collaborate with moneyed interests. I cannot in good conscience work with a legislative branch that is bought and sold by the highest bidders. I am here as a servant, not of you or your biggest donors, but as a servant of the general public. And I must remind each one of you: You are public servants—that’s all you are entitled to be so long as you sit in this building. Anything you do that does not serve the public good is a betrayal of your charge.

“Don’t forget who you should really work for.

“Step one: We need to get private money out of politics. Politics needs to be about ideas, not about maneuvering to maximize financial backing. Your job should not be about power-grabs...nor about courting powerful interests by favors-swapping. The cost of elections has skyrocketed, driving both parties even deeper into corporate pockets—thereby making politicians more beholden to their paymasters. We all can’t help but work for those who sign our checks. The conflicts of interest are flagrant. What remains of political democracy has been undermined as *both* parties have turned to auctioning congressional leadership positions to the man with the most money backing him.

“I am not bought; neither should any of you be.”

DOMESTIC POLICY:

The CSP would champion labor protections, consumer protections, and environmental protections. It would stand up for gay rights, abortion rights, and organized labor. It would take a stand against the gun fetishism that currently plagues the country. It would fight to legalize marijuana, end the war on drugs, and start treating drug addiction as a disorder, not as a crime. The prison-industrial complex would be eliminated.

Unlike the DP, the CSP would put up a fight against the Neoliberal dogmas that continue to infest our public discourse—and do a competent job counteracting right-wing propaganda that floods our media. It would push for demand-side economics. Instead of spreading myths about

benefits somehow magically “trickling down” to the rabble from the plutocracy, it would ensure that tangible benefits percolated outward—to everyone—from within.

The CSP would quarantine itself from the infection of corporate power.

The CSP would fight for an affordable, national, high-speed, mag-lev rail system—run on clean energy. It would fight for improvements to all urban mass transit systems (and ensure that every one was 100% *public*). It would allocate funds for R&D of green technologies (i.e. clean energy)—weaning us off of oil and inaugurating a post-petrol nation.

The CSP would emphasize the importance in investing in public infrastructure and in basic social services. It would stop *and reverse* the hyper-privatization that has transpired for the last three decades. Corporatism would be categorically forbidden; the party would take a bold stand against any/all politicians who engaged in corporatist actions. The CSP would stand up FOR the rank and file by standing up TO corporate power. It would fight for the weal of the general populace and cease to be coerced by powerful lobbies. The party would be largely immune from the influence of Big Money because it would be a grass-roots movement. Candidates would base their policy stances on humanist ideals, not on the agenda of a few paymasters.

The CSP would fight against enormous tax loopholes (e.g. exemptions) for corporations and for the super-rich, and against corporate socialism (the pointless, gargantuan subsidies to Big Business). It would re-institute a steeply progressive marginal tax algorithm, increasing taxes on unearned income while exempting taxes on a reasonable threshold of household expenditures devoted to “essentials” like food, housing, utilities, education, and health.

The CSP would work relentlessly for socialized healthcare: a Universal Public Healthcare system, no compromises. It would also push for ROTA of all industries—especially the financial investment industry. It would push for 100% publicly funded elections. Finally, it would champion the separation of church and state *as well as* the separation of corporation and state.

FOREIGN POLICY:

The CSP would fight for Palestinian rights. It would stop supporting the appalling policies of the IG, reverse the brutal occupation, and promote a humanitarian version of Zionism.

The CSP would drastically reduce the Pentagon’s obscenely bloated budget. It would supplant the false pride and braggadocio of super-patriotism with a more healthy patriotism—a national dignity based on self-criticism. This would involve transplanting the hyper-militarism of the current “hawks” with the good will of “human rights hawks”. It would cease all counterproductive antagonisms, and put diplomatic solutions over military interventions.

The CSP would stop the so-called “long war” on “terror”. It would stop pissing the rest of the world off, and stop pretending that the U.S. was the boss of the world. The national chauvinism of “American exceptionalism” would no longer be championed.

The CSP would put *fair* trade over so-called “free trade”, and stop defining “American interests” as U.S. corporate interests.

Finally, the CSP would demand that the U.S. government apologize for the myriad egregious misdeeds of the past.

This would all be a good start.

Recognize this platform? You shouldn't; it has never existed. This fact is bizarre simply because most intelligent, well-educated people in our country agree with most parts of it. Why, then, have they settled for so long for the absence of a party that has this platform?

"A tall order," you say? This isn't a tall order; it's just a very different kind of order. In fact, it's an eminently reasonable order. The government must start working again on behalf of the rank and file, not on behalf of plutocrats. Currently, both parties are feeding from the same trough. How, then, should we ever expect substantive reforms? If the incentive structure remains the same for all viable parties, then legislation will never substantially change.

Such bold vision is anathema to the DP because it's *bold*; it is anathema to the G.O.P. because it's *credible*. It is important to note that not only would the CSP have virtually nothing in common with the Republican Party, it would have nothing whatsoever in common with the Democratic Party. It would be the first real alternative to business as usual.

PROGNOSIS:

To reiterate, the CSP would offer a platform heretofore never seen by a major party. Point by point, the platform of the CSP has nothing in common with EITHER of the pre-existing parties. Neither the G.O.P. nor the DP does any of the things mentioned above. *Not one.* This is a travesty that has gone on long enough. The CSP is long over-do.

The new party would be predicated on civic-minded resolve—the recognition that the State plays a crucial role in civil society. This means recognizing that highly-concentrated *private* power is just as dangerous as highly-concentrated *government* power—and therefore must be kept in check. (Indeed, a robust, liberal state is the opposite of Statism because it would not be a matter of HCP; it would be minimalist and operate from the bottom-up.) The CSP would symbolize these basic insights in a way they haven't been symbolized since Teddy Roosevelt—the last statesman to attempt a progressive party.

Moreover, such a platform would represent ACTUAL centrism. Only then will the Overton Window be repositioned so that the TRUE center is in the middle of our political purview—and Progressivism is recognized for the reasonable cause that it is. "Radical left" it is not.

Finally, for the first time, Progressives could be mobilized by a party explicitly made for Progressives. The lip-service so often provided by the DP would no longer hold water, because a party would exist that *actually embodied* the lofty claims. No more disappointments for Progressives who vested their hopes in a party that masquerades as an alternative to right-wing politics.

Presumably, the DP would lose the support of all progressives, and therefore be forced to either shift leftward (i.e. toward the true center) or cease to exist altogether. Meanwhile, contrasted with the CSP, people may finally see how utterly ridiculous (and radical) the G.O.P. really is. With the point of reference finally in the TRUE center, independents may start to

perceive how *extremely* right-wing Republican politicians are. The gap between the CSP and the G.O.P. would be gargantuan. Having such a meaningful choice on an election ballot would be truly sublime.

With the CSP, Progressives would no longer be intimidated; we would no longer be drowned out by the *major* parties because we'd BE one of the major parties. With the CSP, Progressives would no longer be marginalized in MSM. We'd be a major topic. The public discourse would be utterly transformed. As with the G.O.P., with the CSP everyone will know exactly what to expect. There would be no wondering.

None of what has occurred over the last decade would have occurred if we had had an authentic two-party system. The G.O.P. were the primary perpetrators of the mess we're now in (both domestically and abroad), but the DP were the enablers every step of the way.

The right wing has had full reign of policy for far too long—even *with the DP in control of congress and/or of the White House*. (Would have the Korean War or Vietnam happened if a humanist were Commander in Chief? Would 9/11 have happened if American foreign policy since WWII had been based on humanism? Would any of the financial catastrophes transpired if we'd stuck to the Keynesian system we'd had in the 40's and 50's?)

Currently, I suspect, there are many *otherwise progressive* public officials who are "Democrats" by default. If they didn't run as Democrats, they wouldn't have a chance in an election—so they settle for the only party available. As a consequence, they are beholden to the incumbent party machine. This barrier to entry for Progressives must be broken.

We can have protest after protest after protest, and rightfully express our frustration with all that is amiss. However, all this amounts to very little unless *we stop voting for right-wing politicians*—including those who operate under the auspices of the DP. The label "Democrat" has come to mean very little...other than "not TOO far to the right".

Even more to the point: It is not so much the politicians themselves who are to blame (after all, they're merely doing what it is they do); *it is the people who vote for right-wing politicians who are really to blame*. It is each person who (irresponsibly) places a vote for corporatists, thus perverting our democracy, who is at fault. We must concentrate on them, and stop complaining that corporatists are being corporatists—as if we should be surprised by it each time.

Imagine, then, for a moment, if the CSP existed.

For the first time in decades, there would be a party that genuinely cares about working class people—and will actually promote policies that put the rank and file FIRST. For the first time, there would be a party who's candidates were not for sale to the highest bidder. With a few rare and notable exceptions, Democrats are often sell-outs, putting capital over labor.

For the first time in decades, the Republicans would have to contend with a unified party. For the first time, there would be a political party that actually stood up to them, consistently, without ever caving in. There would be no bluff to call: the G.O.P. couldn't strong-arm the CSP as they do the DP.

Ironically, the CSP would resemble the G.O.P. insofar as it would have a solid backbone—and couldn't be pushed around or intimidated. In this respect, the CSP would have almost nothing in common with the DP. It would be unified and resolute.

With the CSP, for the first time, the nation would have situation in which a right-wing party was counter-balanced by a genuinely progressive party. (The latter would be positioned at the true center of the political spectrum. No longer would moderate right-wing positions be passed off as "left".)

...And, as is already the case, we'd have no truly left-wing party...which is perfectly fine by me. Even if a left-wing party were ever to arise (a party that was IN REALITY too far to the left), the CSP would be there to counter-balance it. After all, the CSP would be against hyper-socialism just as much as it is against hyper-capitalism. It would be against the wishy-washy relativism of post-modernist ideology as it is against corporatism and national chauvinism.

It's time to bring the U.S. back to the center, where a civil society belongs. A genuinely progressive party is the only way to do this. In the words of Hillel, "If not now, when?"

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FOUR OBJECTIONS TO FORMING THE CSP:

1 "Don't form a progressive party; you'll take valuable votes away from the Democrats...and then the Republicans will win!"

Memo: The right wing is ALREADY winning.

How about this for a change: "If you're at all *less* right-leaning than the G.O.P. (i.e. anywhere to the left of the ultra-right wing), then don't vote for the DP...*lest you take votes away from the CSP.*"

Indeed, the CSP will only work if all remotely progressive-minded people vote for CSP candidates, and cease supporting the DP *all together*. So long as people say to themselves, "Well I'M going to abstain from casting my lot with the CSP simply because I don't think *enough other* people are going to pitch in," the CSP will be ineffective. Such voting rational amounts to a self-fulfilling prophecy. If that's what people *think* will happen, then that's precisely what *will* happen.

However, if enough people vote on principle, not on pessimistic prognostications, then the CSP would be a resounding success. We need a paradigm shift if we want ever want significant change to happen. The CSP would serve as the vehicle by which everyone can mobilize and participate in that unified effort.

In his 2009 opus, *Come Home, America*, William Greider puts the point well: “Obviously, a dramatic shift of [the current] dimensions would be possible only if there were a change in public consciousness, with people grasping that the current predicament goes deeper than a brief detour from the usual [sense of] ‘prosperity’. Instead of trying to run the world, the country’s wealth and ingenuity would come home to concentrate on reconstructing our own embattled country. Instead of preparing for the next war, the U.S. would confront its interior deterioration and begin to rebuild. People would be free to re-imagine the ‘good life’ and how it can be accomplished with greater prudence and wisdom.” (p. 253)

The CSP would help us do precisely this. The DP could never accomplish such a task—simply because it is a product of the old way of doing things. Tony Judt put it well in *Ill Fares The Land*: “The precipitous fall from grace of President Obama, in large measure thanks to his bumbling stewardship of health care reform, has further contributed to the disaffection of a new generation.” (p. 162) His bumbling stewardship of *finance* reform was even more pathetic—and disheartening. Aren’t we tired of being disheartened?

Bumbling stewardship: That’s the DP for you.

2 “But the DP has already done so much! Don’t abandon it now!”

Done so much? In the last three decades, no it hasn’t. Not by a long shot. It has been nothing other than Republican-Lite since Carter. As we survey the DP now, we can’t help but be gravely disappointed. Sometimes, it seems like the 20th century never happened. One must wonder: Did we learn ANYTHING?

The other problem with the DP is that it lacks a cogent narrative. Consequently, it is incapable of mobilizing support for truly progressive policies. By contrast, the CSP has a very clear narrative. One knows EXACTLY what one will get if one votes for an CSP candidate. The G.O.P. has a wonderfully simple, captivating narrative. It is no wonder, then, that Progressives often don’t stand a chance. After one has been labeled an un-American socialist who’s “soft on our enemies”, there’s not much one can do to get people revved up. The key with the CSP is that progressive-minded citizens would have a truly organized way to become *relevant*. It is difficult to galvanize and mobilize large groups of people across a large nation without a political party devoted especially *to them*.

The G.O.P. is highly disciplined. Meanwhile, the DP is about as disciplined as a leaf blowing in the wind. The DP’s delinquency is part failure of nerve, part lack of rectitude. It’s some mixture of the two—depending on the Democrat. Either way, it’s NOT WORKING.

That the DP masquerades as a progressive party is a grave disservice to Progressivism. A genuinely progressive party would tolerate ZERO corporatism. Protests that this vision is overly idealistic (and thus unrealistic) no longer hold water. Tony Judt: “Without idealism, politics is reduced to a form of social accounting, the day-to-day administration of men and things. This too is something that a conservative can survive well enough. But for the Left, it is a catastrophe.” (ibid. p. 142)

Later, Judt points out: “Republics and democracies exist only by virtue of the engagement of their citizens in the management of public affairs. If active or concerned citizens forfeit politics, they thereby abandon their society to its most mediocre and venal public servants.” (ibid. p. 164) And that is precisely what has happened. “The DP by default”: This is no way to improve things.

Let’s be honest: It’s no fun rallying around a party simply because there’s no better alternative. Insisting that people “settle” for half-measures is no way to get people excited. The appeal of the G.O.P. is its bold stance and determination. People like confidence.

3 “But the DP is capable of improving. Just give it a chance. Baby steps.”

Indeed, we’ve heard that song and dance many times before. It’s time to draw the line. After all, it’s only a song and dance.

Tony Judt is blunt about the current state: “Politically-speaking, ours is an age of pygmies.” (ibid. p. 165) Statesmen are no longer true statesmen; they’re savvy businessmen, smooth operators, charlatans, con men, demagogues, and performers skilled in the art of fun-raising and crowd-rallying.

Judt brings to our attention the reasons that desperately needed changes have not been made: “It should by now be clear that the reason they have not happened, or do not work, is because they are imagined, designed and implemented by the very people responsible for the dilemma. There is little point in asking the US Senate to reform its lobbying arrangements. As Upton Sinclair famously observed a century ago, ‘It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.’” (ibid. p. 167)

The DP is endemically flawed. There are staunch EVI standing in our way. The DP is *based on EVI*.

4 “This has been tried dozens of times before. It never works!”

Even Teddy Roosevelt, the last major Progressive figure to make a serious attempt (with the Bull Moose Party, a century ago), couldn’t do it. So what makes us think that this effort will fare any better?

It’s different this time.

Why? Most third parties are either DOA or—if they manage to persist—are largely irrelevant “fringe” groups with little mass appeal. But these parties don’t have a powerful message that resonates with a national audience. They often fixate on a “pet issue”, and base their appeal on that. That is to say, they base their membership on a narrow creed—or a favorite bromide—that addresses that one concern. This is a branding strategy: consumer rights, anti-corporate power, tax reform, environmentalism, anti-war, etc. Such a platform is no basis for a national movement; it is merely the basis for a single-issue caucus.

To start a “third party” or to caucus with a pre-existing party? This is an old topic that’s been beaten to death. We hear ruminations of “a third party” every election cycle, and nothing significant ever really happens—the Green party and the Working Families party on the left, the “Libertarian” party and the “Constitution” party on the right. Sometimes a caucus simply operates within the context of a pre-existing party—the black caucus with the DP or the Tea Party with the G.O.P. Proposals for a third party are dismissed as quixotic—untenable in an endemically two-

party system.

Sometimes, we want to say: “Who HASN’T proposed a third party?”

Well, since TR’s Bull Moose Party, Progressives haven’t really tried at all!

So why, then, is this proposal different? It all depends on grass roots support. This is effected via two things: *awareness generation* and *organization / mobilization*. (The funding will follow suit. Backers will back something only if they think it’s worthwhile and to be taken seriously.) A political party that is not well-organized is doomed. It’s time to start generating awareness and organizing.

CONCLUSION:

Unlike the DP, the CSP will not always be on the defensive. When you *know* that $2+2=4$ and the other guy insists that it equals 11,007, you don’t say, “Please, I beg you: It equals four. I’m so sorry...perhaps we could settle on 5? 11?” You assertively state: “It equals four. And anyone who says otherwise doesn’t know what the heck they’re talking about...or is LYING to you.”

Currently, we have one party saying it’s 11 and the other party saying it’s 11,007. Whenever they “compromise”, then, they split the difference, and chalk it up to “pragmatism” and “bi-partisanship”. So we’ve been living in a world where $2+2= 5,498$. “Hey,” we say with a shrug, “At least it’s not 11,007, as the Republicans want it to be. It’s 5,509 closer to the mark!”

Compared to being off by 11,003, “only” 5,494 doesn’t seem THAT far off. Shouldn’t we be grateful? $2+2=4$. The CSP will stand by that answer.

For too long, Progressives have channeled their energy into whining and complaining. While cathartic, this accomplishes nothing. Writing a scathing column in a progressive periodical may generate awareness—and even applause...but the system remains utterly unchanged. Many of us are already aware, yet we have nothing to DO WITH that awareness. Knowledge alone is impotent. A vehicle for *acting on* the knowledge is required.

The CSP represents revolutionary change—without revolution. It seeks to change the system from within. Meanwhile, the DP offers eloquent talk about “change” and “hope”—alluring buzz words—while continuing with how things have been done for decades. Progressives have wasted the last three decades on a dead end...settling for a party that will never fulfill the promises implied in its lofty sloganeering. This has served only to enervate the Progressive movement that the country so desperately needs.

We don’t get good answers by splitting the difference between two bad answers. Likewise, simply splitting the difference between two prevailing camps is to default on our civic responsibility to support what is right. Such a cowardly move derives from a craving to be part of the incumbent mainstream—regardless of what that may be—all in the name of “pragmatism”...thus abusing an otherwise respectable term. Such people are the courtiers of the established order—too cowardly to take a stand on principle and push for bold, substantive change.

There is no doubt: Obama is an eminently savvy politician. He is a skilled political operator; a noble statesman he is not. He fashions himself as a so-called “pragmatist”. This means that he is a careerist, not a bold innovator. We deserve better than a man who’s greatest skill is rhetorical jujitsu. That he’s *less bad* than George W. Bush is still not good enough. We should stop praising him for being less than horrible.

Some were aghast at the right-wing maneuvering of Obama after he was elected—surrounding himself with the likes of Larry Summers, Timothy Geithner and Rahm Emanuel. But, as Roger D. Hodge has noted: Obama’s behavior is exactly what one should have expected from “a member of a supine party of pseudo-opposition that reveled in giving [the Republican Machine] everything it asked for.” Only the DP would have so exuberantly celebrated “Finance Reform” and “Healthcare Reform” that had been so utterly gutted. The DP should be ashamed at such low standards. But it’s not ashamed. It’s not ashamed simply because it is now positioned on the political spectrum approximately where the G.O.P. had been positioned prior to Reagan. We fail to notice this drastic shift at our peril.

In the CSP, nobody like Joe Lieberman or Harold Ford Jr. or Rahm Emmanuel could ever possibly belong. That such figures have operated under the auspices of “Democrat” should be a flashing, neon, red flag. What does “Democrat” mean anyway? These sad men may have been DINO’s, but the fact remains that they were nevertheless DIN’s. No true progressive would ever caucus with the right wing.

Alas, the credence and the laurels of the DP have largely rested on one sales pitch: “It’s a slight improvement over the Republicans, so shut up and be thankful.” Progressives have acquiesced time and time again, for lack of a better option. The “catch” was that it was their right to CREATE another option for themselves.

Progressives are ready for a political party—a party that actually puts its money where its mouth is. We progressives have a way forward if we dedicate ourselves to the endeavor—but only if we dedicate ourselves to the endeavor, and stop “settling”. We FEEL helpless; but we’re NOT helpless. We’ve been our own biggest enemy—cringing in a corner and apologizing for our noble stances. Enough’s enough. The time has come for the CSP.