Challengers to Duopoly

Why Third Parties Matter
in American Two-Party Politics

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For those in the movement built by Lyndon LaRouche, unwavering devotion to its bright, narcissistic leader and faith in his worldview are the paramount virtues. It is ironic that LaRouche's followers regard their leader's thoughts as virtually infallible, for his view of things has undergone substantial change over the years. But it has always featured enemies, dark conspiracies, and a reality that is very unlike what most people assume it to be. People old enough to remember late 1980s television spots may recall some remarkable LaRouche-sponsored ads alleging that Queen Elizabeth was involved with drugs, that Walter Mondale had links to the KGB, and that Henry Kissinger was leading a three-thousand-year-old global conspiracy.

LaRouche began his political odyssey in the late 1940s as a man of the Left. He joined the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist communist group. Later he built ties to various 1960s New Left elements.

LaRouche's trek during the 1970s took him and the movement from far left to the radical right. By 1978 he was declaring that "It is not necessary to call oneself a fascist. It is simply necessary to be one." He and his staff also were garnering a reputation as effective spies—intelligence gatherers collecting information useful in neutralizing foes. They came into close contact with certain people in the Pentagon and National Security Council during the first Reagan term. A Pentagon official praised LaRouche's group for being "very supportive of the [Reagan] administration."

LaRouche declared for the presidency eight times, a record never equaled by anyone else. His first run, in 1976, was as the nominee of his own U.S. Labor Party. That campaign earned him 40,043 votes. An article carried in the New York Times in 1979 charged that the U.S. Labor Party had become an anti-Semitic Far Right cult.

After the 1970s LaRouche and his followers deserted the third-party approach. They found more potential and profit in becoming a third force, penetrating—infiltrating—a very reluctant Democratic Party through its accessible primary processes. LaRouche announced his quest for the Democratic nomination in every presidential round from 1980 through 2004. Over these years he qualified for and received nearly nineteen million dollars in federal matching funds as a nominal candidate for nomination by the Democrats.

During his 1992 race, LaRouche was a federal prison inmate in Minnesota serving the fourth year on a fifteen-year sentence for mail fraud and conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service. He won release on parole in 1994.

When in the 1986 Illinois Democratic primary two LaRouche followers defeated the party-endorsed "real Democrats" for lieutenant governor and secretary of state, Adlai Stevenson III, the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, felt compelled to withdraw from the ticket and to run as an independent. Stevenson lost, and the GOP reaped the benefit of the Democratic debacle. LaRouche and his movement were instrumental in convincing two million Californians to embrace an initiative proposition that, if it had passed, would have quarantined AIDS patients.

Followers of LaRouche were visible and active in the anti-Obama Tea Party rallies in the summer of 2009. The visual image they created and displayed depicted the new president as Adolf Hitler, complete with cutoff moustache.


Thus her tally in November 1984 was less than a third of what Commoner's numbers had been in 1980.

The New Alliance Party

The Bronx was the birthplace of the New Alliance Party in 1979. The party proclaimed itself to be a "black-led multi-racial coalition of progressive people." For the first half decade of its existence, the New Alliance Party concentrated on politics in New York City, where it came to be known for its leftist positions on issues. It networked with the Reverend Al Sharpton and coalesced with various local grassroots groups opposed to Mayor Edward Koch and what the NAP described as Koch's antiblack, reactionary policies.

Venturing into national politics in 1984, the NAP nominated for the presidency Dennis Serrette, a Harlem-born African American who was an active trade unionist. By 1988 it was in a position to offer U.S. Senate nominees in four states as well as candidates for other offices. Lenora Fulani, a black New York psychologist and political activist, was the New Alliance presidential standard-bearer in 1988 and 1992. From the NAP's beginning until it was dissolved in 1994, Fulani was the party's most prominent and effective public face.

Fred Newman, a New York-based white psychologist, was by many accounts the party's real behind-the-scenes guiding light and a major source of its considerable wealth. Newman had founded Social Therapy, a radical, neo-Marxist strain of psychotherapy. Centers for Change was the name Newman chose for the health-care collective he set up to apply and advance his therapeutic regime.

New Alliance became a magnet, attracting a wide array of critics. Rumors surfaced about life and events inside the NAP and Centers for Change, and exposés by people who had severed their connections with Newman and Fulani began to appear. One of the most damaging came from Dennis Serrette, who had carried the torch as NAP's first presidential nominee. In 1987 Serrette described New Alliance as a cult and wrote that it was not black-led and not even progressive.
Newman had been associated in the past with LaRouche. Critics charged that Newman had learned stealth politics from him. There were even some who suspected that Newman and Fulani had followed LaRouche in his ideological trek from left to right and that NAP’s real though secret purpose was to infiltrate, surveil, and disrupt genuinely leftist groups.

NAP leaders were also denounced for being anti-Semitic. The party denied it, but there were remarks on record that lent some support to the claim. In something she wrote in 1989, Fulani had declared that Jews “had to sell their souls to acquire Israel” and “to function as mass murderers” to stay there.33

“Two roads are better than one” was a prominent slogan within the NAP. What that meant in practice became clear in 1988. The NAP first announced its support for Jesse Jackson’s 1988 presidential quest. With Jackson out of the race by the close of the Democratic primary season, New Alliance then ran its own candidate, Fulani, for president.

Fulani qualified for and took federal matching funds. She used them to seek ballot access and advertise her campaign. To the surprise of nearly everyone outside the NAP, she made the November ballot in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. It was the NAP’s most substantial national achievement and a milestone in U.S. history. Fulani was both the first woman and the first black presidential nominee of any party whose name appeared in every jurisdiction with electoral votes to cast. Fulani took 225,934 votes nationwide.

Fulani ran again in 1992. Maria Elizabeth Munoz, her 1992 running mate, was a seasoned activist in the Chicano/a movement and in Peace and Freedom Party politics. The NAP’s 1992 presidential vote was only a third what it had been in 1988. Over the years after the NAP died, Fulani and Newman gave their support to Perot’s 1996 candidacy and then enlisted in the Independence Party, a rising star in New York partisan politics.34

The Natural Law Party

Travelers through rural Iowa are often surprised to find that Fairfield, the seat of Jefferson County, is a central U.S. venue of Transcendental Meditation. The TM movement swept America in the 1960s. More than a movement, in southeastern Iowa TM has become an important culture. It is the reason many of the area’s inhabitants moved there. Since 1974 Fairfield has been home to Maharishi International University, now known as Maharishi University of Management. Nearby there is Maharishi Vedic City, a small community TM’s devotees built as a demonstration plot for the ideal city.

Born in Fairfield in 1992, the Natural Law Party was the creation of local academics, businesspeople, and other citizens, who dedicated their new party to “bringing the light of science into politics.” It eventually became a transnational party, with devotees and branches throughout the United States and in other nations.