

Building the Green Party into a Mass-Membership Party

by Howie Hawkins, edited by Bruce Dixon.

An earlier version of this was delivered as a workshop at the 2016 annual meeting of the Green Party.

1. The Problem: Our Green Party is underfunded and weakly organized at the grassroots.

- A) The Green Party is *too weak to compete for power* with corporate parties.
- B) We are far *too weak to be a credible alternative* that can attract, service or retain a mass base of progressive refugees from democrats, independents, people of color who vote democratic out of fear, or the downwardly mobile working class whites ignored by the democrats and courted by white nationalist republicans.
- C) On every level, the Green Party has *insufficient financial resources* to field and support the staff needed to organize and administer a mass party.
- D) Republicans and Democrats use one percenter money and corporate media to lead masses of their voters. Republican and Democrat campaigns and candidates are pretty much independent of local and national party structures, and independent of their own voter bases.
 - 1) Donald Trump won the Republican nomination using reality star cachet and free media to appeal directly to Republican primary voters, going against the will of state and national Republican party organizations.
 - 2) While Bernie Sanders didn't use a lot of corporate money he displayed his absolute indifference to his activist base by unconditionally endorsing Hillary.
- E) The Green Party is in this situation because it currently "uses" the same model, only without the money and without the media, and consequently without much success.

2. The Solution: Restructure ourselves as a mass-membership party of dues-paying members organized into local affiliates.

- A) **Dues give us the financial resources we need.** The Sanders campaign proves the money is there, as does the existence of tens of thousands of churches supported by the willing contributions of poor people.
- B) **Locals enable mass participation**, where grassroots people can be active in the party.
- C) **Locals give us the grassroots organization** for grassroots democracy and accountability of state and national representatives, candidates, and elected officials.
- D) **Locals are where we can unify the working class by building relationships** and solidarity across lines of race, geography (race and class segregation), across occupational divisions within the working class (union vs. non-union, big vs. small business, private vs. public workers, workers in the welfare and prisons systems vs. workers working for the welfare and prison systems).
- E) **Locals are where we can build social movements.** Before the 1960s and the rise of the nonprofit-industrial complex, social movements weren't built by single-issue organizations competing for grants. They were built by self-funding, dues-paying parties, labor unions, and farmers alliances. In latter half of the 19th century, the labor unions and farmers alliances organized the parties. In the first half of the 20th century the left parties organized unions and consumer, peace, and civil rights campaigns.
- F) **Locals are where we can conduct political education** in study groups and forums

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about social problems, the system, and the power structure, about what our policy platform and social vision should be, and about how to organize and maintain party organizations, issue campaigns, and electoral campaigns.

- G) **Locals are where we can contend with the nonprofit industrial complex and its one percenter funders for leadership of the social movements**, and potentially revolutionize them.
- H) We'll return to the characteristics of Green Party locals in the Green Party we wish to build after we set its place in the history of political parties.

3. Origin and Some Characteristics of the Mass Membership Political Party

- A) Parties arose out of legislative caucuses for the top-down mobilization of voters.
- B) Left parties arose as mass-membership structures in response, as bottom-up democratic organizations to advance reform platforms and hold leaders accountable.
- C) The mass-membership party was an invention of the left in the late nineteenth century.
- D) The mass-membership party grew out of working people's movements fighting for the franchise and labor rights and protections in Europe.
- E) The mass-membership party was how working people organized themselves into effective national parties based on grassroots local organizations and self-funding with membership dues.
- F) The mass-membership party was how working people were able to compete for power with the old top-down elitists parties of the landed, and later the business elites.
- G) It was the mass-membership party that won the franchise for the unpropertied, along with labor and social reforms for the common people.
- H) The mass-membership party was still-born in the United States during the abolitionist, populist, and socialist phases of left third party politics because they never consolidated a structure of dues-paying members organized into active local branches.
- I) US left third parties (abolitionist, populist, green) have been organized instead on the top-down models of Democrats and Republicans.
- J) The only US exception to this was the Socialist Party (1900-1936) which did set up a small mass-membership party (120,000 at 1912 peak), but was undermined by internal sectarianism (expelling the IWW in 1912), by government repression around World War I, and eventually by fusion with Democrats (a process that ran from the 1936 American Labor Party to the 1958 victory of "realignment" proponents – entering the Democratic Party)

4. How the Parties Got This Way, A Historical Overview of US Political Party Alignments, Top-Down Initiatives and Bottom Up Responses

A) Overview

When many of us think of anti-democratic manipulations of party procedures we think of the present day Democratic party's superdelegate rules. But those were only the latest instance of twenty decades of bending and remaking the rules of parties,

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campaigns and elections to suit the changing needs of the one percent of one percenters...

B) Before the US of A...

- 1) Parties arose historically in concert with the rise of representative assemblies as parts of the state.
- 2) The Roman Senate had them (Patricians representing aristocratic landed nobles and Plebians representing wealthy middle-class merchants). Possibly every class society with a republic had political parties.
- 3) Modern parties began in England during the English Civil War (1642-1651) (Parliamentarians or "Roundheads" vs. Royalists or "Cavaliers") and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (pro-parliament Whigs vs. pro-monarch Tories).
- 4) The US two-party system developed on the model of the Mother Country British 2-party system:

C) 1st US Party System (1787-1824)

- 1) Political alignments
 - a) Federalists (Hamiltonians, aristocratic, pro England, pro commercial elites) vs.
 - b) Democratic Republicans (Jeffersonians, democratic, pro Revolutionary France [but not Haiti!], pro democratic mass of middle class farmers and artisans)
- 2) A **legislative caucus system** persisted until the 1830s.
 - a) Candidates were selected by party caucuses in the legislative bodies
 - b) The legislative caucuses were increasingly regarded as elitist, undemocratic, and not representative of the voting base of the parties.

D) 2nd US Party System (1824-1854):

- 1) Political alignments
 - a) The aristocratic Federalists died as democratic ideals prevailed
 - b) Property qualifications on franchise were eliminated
 - c) Democratic Republicans split into Democrats and National Republicans, or Whigs.
 - d) Democrats support strong President and minimal federal government (free trade, no nationally-chartered banks).
 - e) Whigs support strong Congress and federal action (tariffs, public investment, nationally-chartered banks) for economic modernization.
- 2) An open convention system persisted until the 1890s. Its characteristics are discussed in section E following.

E) 3rd US Party System (1854-1896):

- 1) Political alignments
 - a) Whigs divide and die over slavery.

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- b) Republicans, growing out of third party movement (Liberty, Free Soil), becomes second party in Congress in 1856 and 1858 and capture the presidency in 1860 in four-way race.
- c) After Civil War, Republicans represent protectionist big and small business
- d) After Civil War, Democrats represent free trade big business, southern planters and white supremacy, and northern ethnic working class urban machines.
- e) Both major parties agree on tight money deflationary policies against challenges of populist third parties – Greenback Labor, Anti-Monopoly, Union Labor, People's – who elected thousands to local, state and federal office.

2) The Open Convention System (1830s to 1890s)

- a) Party conventions were an American invention in the era of Jacksonian Democracy, which also removed property qualification on the franchise.
- b) In 1830, the Anti-Masons, an anti-elitist third party which would provide some of the initial leaders of the Liberty and Free Soil parties, held the first national convention.
- c) The first national convention of a major party was held in 1832, when the Democrats nominated Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren as his running mate.
- d) The open convention process that developed was to call party members to precinct caucuses that elected delegates to county conventions, which in turn elected delegates to state conventions, which in turn elected delegates to national conventions.
- e) The adoption of party platforms moved from legislative caucuses to party conventions, starting with third parties, the Anti-Masons in 1830, the National Democrats or Whigs in 1832, and the Equal Rights Party (Loco-Focos) in 1836.
- f) The Democrats were the first major party to adopt a platform in 1840.
- g) While open conventions were more democratic than nomination by party legislative caucuses, the problem was that *anyone could participate* no matter what their political principles.
- h) The open convention system became undemocratic:
 - Boss-led political patronage machines came to dominate the Democrats and Republicans.
 - Opportunists in the minority major party (Republicans in the South, Democrats in the North) who were not committed to the populist reform program flooded the farmer-labor populist party conventions to promote fusion campaigns. **Fusion is when a single candidate is allowed to appear on multiple party lines.** Invariably, fusion is a way for major parties to access the voting base of minor ones.
 - The farmer-labor populist movement threw up a series of national parties: Greenback Labor, Anti-Monopoly, Union Labor, and People's between 1878 and 1896.

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- But fusion at the state and local level repeatedly created problems: when fusion slates won, as the major party coalition partners tended to drop the populist program once in office. That's pretty much how fusion works to this day.
- i) The People's Party gets co-opted by the Democrats in 1896 under the open convention system:
 - The People's Party base was millions organized into hundreds of dues-paying county Farmers Alliances: the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union (Southern Alliance), the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union, and the National Farmers' Alliance (Northern Alliance).
 - Taking advantage of a key vulnerability of the open convention system, major party politicians in the minority party of their region (Republicans in the South, Democrats in the North) packed People's Party conventions where the Farmers' Alliances were not well-organized.
 - The result was fusion campaigns in many states and ultimately the cross-endorsement of Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1896, which killed the People's Party.
 - As Lawrence Goodwyn noted in *The Populist Moment*: “...In democratic terms, the structural weakness of the People's Party evolved from the failure of its organizers, in the founding convention of 1892, to understand that **the third party, to be authentically democratic, had to be organized as a mass party with a mass membership. It was organized instead, like all large American parties before and after, as a representative party, with elite cadres of party regulars dominating the organizational machinery from precinct to national convention. The People's Party spoke, rather more tellingly than most American parties have ever done, in the name of the people. But in structural terms the People's Party was not made up of the people; it was comprised of party elites. Its ultimate failure, therefore, was conceptual – a failure on a theoretical level of democratic analysis.**”
 - In other words, in the contest between what we would today call *liberal representationalism* as an organizational model and direct democracy, the liberals won.

F) 4th US Party System (1896-1932):

- 1) Political alignments:
 - a) Democrats vs. Republicans.
 - b) Democrats: southern planters, pro free trade business, urban ethnic machines, pro-regulation progressive wing.
 - c) Republicans: northern big and small business, pro tariffs, pro-regulation progressive wing.

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- d) Socialist Party and state- and local-based Farmer-Labor, Progressive, and Labor parties elect thousands to local, state, and federal office on platforms of labor rights, social insurance, and public ownership of utilities and – in some cases – big businesses.

2) The Primary System, 1900 to the present. Direct partisan primary elections were the elite response to the credibility crises of the open convention eleven decades ago, and to the challenge posed by the Socialists, who used a membership convention to nominate candidates.

- a) While their ostensible purpose of was to strip the undemocratic Republican and Democrat party bosses of their power over campaigns and candidates, direct primary elections aimed at disorganizing the Socialist Party's system of democratic membership conventions, since Socialists were winning hundreds of local elections and taking over city governments.
- b) Primaries atomize voters and give power to candidate organizations and their rich investors, who can afford to use corporate media to speak to voters.
- c) Although the open convention system survives as a caucus system in some states alongside primaries, the direct primary was promulgated by the progressive movement and spread to almost all the states between 1899 and 1920.
- d) The result was that party nominations were handed from party bosses to capitalist bosses who could pre-select the options voters had in primaries in the preceding "money primary" where the rich invested in the candidates they preferred.
- e) The voters in primary elections were and are left atomized and unorganized with no grassroots structures through which to discuss issues, plan campaigns, agree on platforms, nominate candidates, elect party leaders, and hold candidates and leaders accountable.
- f) To this day, primary elections retain the anti-democratic problem of open conventions: anybody can participate in the party primary no matter what their politics or participation in the party. Primary elections function as an open door through which any candidate or campaign with enough money and media can enter and potentially dominate a party's ticket.

G) 5th US Party System (1932-1976):

1) Political Alignments

- a) Democrats vs. Republicans.
- b) Democrats' liberal New Deal Coalition dominates.
- c) Bases of parties remain the largely the same except that most blacks and some northern farmers move into Democratic Party.
- d) Liberal and conservative wings in both parties
- e) Democrats enact watered-down versions of Socialists' social insurance programs.

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- f) Labor and the Left enter the Democrats in 1936 (led by Communists' Popular Front policy, followed over the next two decades by Socialists and Farmer-Labor parties).
- g) Left third parties tiny and have no influence on national policy debate.
- 2) **Bottom up responses to the primary system: The Membership Convention System (Early 20th Century Socialist, Progressive, and Farmer-Labor Parties)**
 - a) The Socialist Party developed a different structure: the democratic membership convention.
 - b) They drew two lessons from the end of the People's Party, which many of the founders had been members of:
 - First: Independent politics. The Socialist Party constitution required no electoral coalitions with Democrats or Republicans.
 - Second: Only members who pay dues were allowed to vote on party decisions.
 - c) The Socialists didn't want their conventions flooded by progressive Democrats and Republicans with different agendas.
 - d) The national party was a federation of state parties, but state parties had to meet minimum requirements (e.g., at least 10 locals of at least 5 members or 200 members in total in the 1917 party constitution) and pay dues on a per capita basis to support the national party (e.g., about \$10 per member in 1917 in inflation-adjusted dollars).
 - e) Socialists maintained their membership convention system alongside the primary system: Socialists nominated by convention and then campaigned for their nominees in primaries if necessary and almost always winning those primaries.
 - f) The Socialists argued against the primary system as less democratic than their membership conventions.
 - g) In a discussion of the spread of primary elections, the *Socialist Call* in 1914 denounced the progressives' push for direct primaries: "*In their eagerness to get the reputation for being democrats, those pseudo-democrats who are running things just now want to break up political parties. If they really wanted to have real democracy, they would pattern parties after our party.*"
 - h) The Socialists realized that the primary system atomized and disorganized the people.
 - i) So did the elites in the 2-party system: Example of NY Socialists in 1920:
 - 10 Socialists were elected and seated in NY state Assembly after the 1918 election
 - In the climate of the Red Scare and Palmer Raids against the anti-war Socialists following World War I, the New York State Assembly expelled the five socialists elected in 1920.
 - A special election was called to replace them, but their districts re-elected all

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of them.

- They were not seated by the Assembly again.
- To help justify its actions, the Assembly's Judiciary Committee wrote a massive 4,428 page report on "Revolutionary and Subversive Movements Abroad and at Home." The section on the Socialist Party of America is revealing:
 - *"The expression 'Socialist Party of America' is really a misnomer for the group operating under this name is not in a party....The Socialist Party is in reality a membership organization....A distinction must be drawn at this time between the members of the Socialist Party of America and the enrolled Socialists....A person enrolling under the Socialist Party emblem on registration day in this state does not thereby become a member of the Socialist Party of America."*
 - **In other words to be in a party is by their definition to be unorganized.** The last thing the one percenters wanted was for the unorganized working class to become well-organized politically.
- j) The Wisconsin Progressive Party, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, the North Dakota Non-Partisan League, and several local Labor and Farmer-Labor parties around the country used the Membership Convention System.
- k) As the 1936 presidential election approached, the Wisconsin Progressives and Minnesota Farmer-Laborites had elected 2 governors, 4 U.S. Senators, and 13 members of the U.S. House.
- l) Major unions such as the UAW and many local labor councils passed resolutions in favor of an independent Labor party campaign in 1936.
- m) The Democratic National Committee polled and found a FDR would lose if a three-way race with a progressive third party.
- n) Floyd Olson, the Farmer-Labor Governor of Minnesota and leading contender to lead a third party run, died of stomach cancer in 1936.
- o) Huey Long of Louisiana, another possible candidate, was assassinated in 1935 a month after announcing his candidacy.
- p) The Democrats went all out to co-opt the third party movement.
- q) FDR and labor Democrats created a fusion-oriented American Labor Party in New York with FDR at the top of the ticket.
- r) The FDR Democrats made deals with Farmer-Laborites, Progressives, and Non-Partisans, and that cut off the third party option in 1936 and eventually led to their merger into the Democratic Party in the 1944, 1946, and 1956 respectively.
- s) The labor movement and the Communists (about 40,000 members in 1936) led much of the left into the Democrats' New Deal coalition in the 1936 election.

H) 6th US Party System (1976-2016):

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- 1) Political alignments
 - a) Democrats vs. Republicans.
 - b) Both parties move right with roll-back of New Deal/Great Society reforms and continued growth of militarism and imperialism.
 - c) Professional middle-class moves from Republicans to Democrats.
 - d) Southern white Democrats and northern ethnic white Democrats move into Republican Party. Republican ideology of deregulation, law and order, and social program retrenchment dominate national politics even when Democrats (Carter, Clinton, Obama) hold the presidency.
 - e) While the Democrats and Republicans disagree on social issues (abortion, guns, god, gays), they agree on an ideology of meritocratic competition where well-rewarded professionals and owners and downwardly mobile workers all get their just deserts.
 - f) Both corporate parties have no real plans or intention to reduce economic inequality, slow the growth of the prison state, or rein in the American Empire.
 - g) Democrats with corporate funders setting the agenda rely on a mass voter base of social liberals – the professional-managerial class plus people of color voting defensively against Republican social conservatism.
 - h) Consequently, working class voters of all colors increasingly abstain.
 - i) Third parties have no influence on national party debate.
 - j) Of many post-60s New Left third party initiatives (Peace and Freedom, People's, La Raza Unida, Citizens, National Black Independent Political Party, New Party, Labor Party, Working Families Party), only Green Party survives as a national independent party and elects a few hundred to local – and a few to state – office between 1986 and 2016.
 - 2) **Primary elections are tweaked in various ways or sometimes eliminated to prevent leftish challenges from the Democratic party's base, as the prospect of elite candidates losing their primary elections looms.**
 - a) Many cities eliminate partisan primaries and make their municipal elections “non-partisan” to prevent major party nominees from emerging outside the orbits of big contributors, and to make candidates and campaigns more independent of party affiliations and a party's base voters.
 - b) Some states adopt “open primary” laws to ensure that all partisan primary elections are susceptible to hijacking by big money.
 - c) In the Democratic party, the superdelegate rules roll back the party's process in part to what they were before the institution of the primary election.
- I) **7th US Party System? (2016-?):**
- 1) Political alignments and possibilities
 - 2) Will the Green Party break the historic mold of US parties and break out
 - a) The two-party system may be disintegrating opening up big opportunity for the

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Greens.

- b) A three-, four-, or five-party system may be emerging:
 - Corporate/militarist Democrats
 - Progressive/populist/socialist Greens
 - Breakup of the Republican coalition: three factions on the right fighting for the Republican brand or forming new parties:
 - Establishment Republicans: socially conservative corporate militarists
 - Trumpist White Nationalists: socially conservative, anti-immigrant, racist, anti trade, isolationist
 - Libertarians: socially moderate to liberal, free market, anti social programs, anti-war
- c) Trump and Sanders lead revolts of the popular bases of the corporate-led Republican and Democratic parties.
- d) Will Republicans divide between pro-corporate militarists and Trumpist white nationalists?
- e) Will Democrats divide between pro-corporate militarists represented by Clinton and progressive populists and democratic socialists represented by Sanders?
- f) Will the Republican corporate militarists merge with the corporate militarists in the Clinton-led Democratic Party?
- g) Will the Green Party incorporate the disaffected Sandernistas?
- h) Will Green Party win over working class people of color who now vote Democratic out of fear of Republicans, who have long branded themselves as the white man's party?
- i) Will the Green Party win over pissed-off working class whites from reactionary white nationalist appeal of Trumpism?

5. Back to the Present: Characteristics of current political parties

- A) The Green Party in the United States is structured like the Democrats and Republicans, where their party enrollment bases are organizationally detached from formal party committees.
- B) Democrat, Republican and Green candidate organizations and their funders are the real party power structures and run the parties from the top down.
- C) Democrats, Republicans, and Greens now conform to state election laws designed primarily to determine who can vote in primaries.
- D) State election laws vary by state but have these common characteristics:
 - 1) The foremost concern of state election laws is who votes in primary elections
 - a) Whether closed based on party enrollment, or open based on choosing ballot at primary election, or hybrid semi-closed or semi-open systems
 - b) "Members" just tell the state what party they are in, no matter what their politics.
 - c) Primary elections impose no requirement to agree with party principles.

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- d) “Members” have the “right” as atomized, unorganized individuals to vote in state-run party primaries and caucuses, but their choices are limited to the candidates pre-selected by campaign organizations and their funders.
- 2) State election laws rarely concern themselves much with party structures
 - a) States don’t care whether party officials are elected at primaries, caucuses, or conventions or appointed by existing officials. Party committees are invariably dominated by self-selected insiders.
 - b) Insiders know the rules. Grassroots have no ongoing organization through which to participate in party structures.
 - c) Democrat, Republican and Green committee members are not accountable to organized members. In every case there are no defined and local bases of members to which they must answer.
- 3) Party committees are primarily for electoral mobilization.
 - a) Party committees are emphatically NOT the site of policy development or planning campaigns around issues.
 - b) Most people join for career and business reasons: to get rewarded with government or campaign jobs and contracts.
- E) The real “party” power structures are campaigns and their wealthy investors. Party committees and platforms are trumped by the candidate organizations.
 - 1) Example 1: the Vermont Rainbow Coalition:
 - a) Vermont Rainbow Coalition captured the state Democratic executive committee and wrote the state platform
 - b) Gov. Madeline Kuhn, Sen. Pat Leahy, and other Democrats ignored party organization. Their base was their own campaign organizations and the banks, utilities, and real estate interests that funded them.
 - c) VT Rainbow Coalition then joined with Burlington Progressives who had elected Sanders mayor, several city council members, and a couple of state legislators to form the Vermont Progressive Party (which has since co-opted itself by doing fusion or cross-endorsements with the Democratic Party).
 - 2) Example 2: the Ralph Nader campaign of 2000, and the Jill Stein campaign of 2016. In both these cases the campaign raised more than ten times the money and had many more staff than the entire national and state party apparatus (if you can call it that) put together.

4. Back to the Solution Part 1: Dues and the Green Party

- A) If someone isn’t committed enough to contribute a modest amount to support the party, why should we give them the right to participate in decision making?
- B) Without clear membership standards, party organizations are subject to the problem of people flooding in when the party is ebbing (e.g., the Nader campaign), making decisions without the experience of committed members, and then flooding out when the party is waning (e.g., post-Nader backlash), leaving the committed party members

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to live with the consequences.

- C) This is how the Green Party structure was changed from the original mass-membership structure of dues-paying membership organized into locals into the top-down mobilization model of the Democrats and Republicans.
- D) Without clear membership standards and leadership bodies accountable directly to organized grassroots members, it is impossible to have a principled party where leaders, candidates, and elected officials are directly accountable to the grassroots membership.
- E) The switch by the Greens to the top-down mobilization structure of the Democrats and Republicans largely defunded the national party and disorganized the base of the party.
- F) Dues could be submitted to the national with a significant percentage rebated to organized state party organizations, which in turn could rebate half of that to local parties.
- G) Or states could collect dues and provide a per capita to the national (say \$10 per member like the Socialist Party did) and share the rest between the state and locals.
- H) Dues could be sliding scale, with a low-income level starting at what the populists in the Farmers Alliances paid, \$30 a year in today's inflation-adjusted dollars, with \$10 dollars going to the national and \$20 to the state and its locals.
- I) What kind of money could this amount raise?
 - 1) Assuming everyone is poor and pays to minimum of \$30 a year:
 - a) 10,000 members would raise \$300,000. That's almost three times the 2016 GP-US net operating budget of about \$115,000, which it takes \$80,000 spent on fundraising to raise.
 - b) 100,000 members would raise \$3 million. At this point we would have nearly matched the Socialist Party peak of 120,000 members in 1912. We could support paid organizers in every state.
 - c) 1 million members would raise \$30 million. At this point we are approaching the scale of the Knights of Labor (700,000 members at its 1886 peak) and the three Farmers Alliances (7.2 million at their 1890 peak) of the populist era.
 - 2) \$30 is low. ACORN and the National Welfare Rights Organization required \$5 a month or \$60 a year.
 - 3) Assume median income gives \$10 a month, \$120 a year, and median is average of all dues payers. How much money would this raise?
 - a) 10,000 members would raise \$1.2 million.
 - b) 100,000 members would raise \$12 million
 - c) 1 million members would raise \$120 million.
 - d) The Sanders campaign had 2.5 million donors. This is doable.
- J) **Green Objections to membership dues**
 - 1) *Some say that dues in political parties are illegal.* Not true. See *March Fong Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee* 489 U.S. 214 (1989)

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- a) In the U.S. Supreme Court case of *March Fong Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*, various Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian party committees sued the California Attorney General saying that various provision of state election law, including prescriptions for the dues county committee members must pay and the right of party committees to campaign for their endorsed candidates in primaries, violated their party rights of free association and free speech under the 1st and 14th Amendments.
 - b) The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the election laws AG Eu was trying to enforce were unconstitutional “since they burden the First Amendment rights of political parties and their members without serving a compelling state interest.”
 - c) While the ruling said the state election law cannot prescribe the dues members must pay, it certainly did not prohibit dues. It said parties have the right to determine dues for themselves.
 - d) The only decision-making right state election laws confer non-dues paying “members” – i.e., registrants or enrollees in close primary states, those who ask for Libertarian ballots in open primary states – is the right to vote in primaries for nominations to public and, in many states, party office.
 - e) All other decisions can be made by dues-paying membership bodies.
- 2) The Libertarian Party has long apportioned state delegations to their national convention based on the paid members in each state. It has had no legal challenges.
 - 3) *Dues are a poll tax. Dues will discourage poor and working class people from participating.*
 - a) A political party is a voluntary private association, not a public accommodation
 - b) In fact, poor and working class people contribute a far higher proportion of their income to charitable (church, etc.) and dues-paying civic and labor (NAACP, unions, etc.) organizations than do middle class professionals and business owners and the corporate elite.

5. Back to the Solution, Part 2: Green Party Locals

- A) There is no necessary conflict between encouraging locals and state parties, but for the purposes of having all officers accountable to defined sets of members, membership must be something that happens at the local level or it does not happen at all. In other words nobody should be permitted to serve as an officer of the party without being a member of a local.
- B) Membership
 - 1) The national party could require require a signed membership form for all individual members so there is one membership standard for all Greens and an equal basis for representation based on one member, one vote.
 - 2) The membership form should have pledge the member agrees to by signing that affirms their agreement with basic party principles, such as political independence

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from the corporate parties and money and the four pillars of Green politics: Ecology, Nonviolence, Social Justice, Democracy

- 3) **The current representation formulas for the national committee and national convention** are a complex mix of proxies for living, breathing members, including campaign strength, in-state voting strength, Presidential voting strength, and number of members (defined as enrollees in close primary states, internal membership role in open primary states, or signatures on state party ballot access petitions).
 - 4) Under these anti-democratic schemes, Green national committee representatives and national convention delegates are detached from any grassroots body of members who can instruct them and hold them accountable.
 - 5) Greens themselves (however defined) are not now organized into party organizations that directly elect their convention and national committee reps.
 - 6) The national should require state parties to meet a minimum level of local organization to be affiliated because we have too many “virtual state parties” consisting of a leadership body and no ongoing local organizing.
- C) Green Party locals must have regular meetings and activities, or else why would people be willing to pay dues? People don't join churches because of the doctrine. They join churches because they have programs for the young, for the seniors, for singles, wraparound services of all kinds.
- D) **Green party locals can revolutionize the character of the social movements, which are entirely too important to be left to the leadership of the nonprofit industrial complex, whose agendas are set by their one percenter funders.**
- 1) We should and must contend with the nonprofit industrial complex for the leadership of the movements against police murder and brutality, the prison state, nuclear power and economic and environmental justice, peace and more.
 - 2) When we DO leave the leadership of social movements to the nonprofits, they tend to regard us as just another single issue organization whose “issue” is running people for office. That's practically the definition of self-inflicted irrelevance.
 - 3) Local leadership and rank and file should be keenly aware of, and constantly make others aware of the differences between their internally democratic and accountable leadership model, and the leadership models native to the nonprofit world. Nonprofit leadership teams are either self-selected, or selected by funders, self-perpetuating, and not accountable to the constituencies they purportedly serve.
 - 4) Funded Green Party locals, with and without the aid of state and national structures when those exist, can bring significant resources to bear backing up the grassroots forces on the scene at any upsurge of the movement and stay there. Right now ONLY the nonprofits have the resources, the staying power to place organizers on the ground and keep them there months at a time.
- E) **Green Party locals are where we can conduct political education**
- 1) Political education in study groups and forums about social problems, the system and the power structure;

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- 2) Political education about what OUR policy platform and social vision should be;
 - 3) Political education about how to organize and maintain party bodies, issue campaigns, electoral campaigns, and more.
- F) The national and state parties should have paid organizers who can make sure the party is responsive to member needs and can teach basic organizing skills, such as:
- 1) how to structure a local that is functional and democratic
 - 2) how to conduct business meetings
 - 3) how to recruit new members one on one
 - 4) how to hold public forums
 - 5) how to conduct political education in study groups and discussions after topical presentations
 - 6) how to participate in or initiate issue-based campaigns
 - 7) how to actively (not passively) leaflet and table at public events and on the street
 - 8) how to run write election or issue-based campaign plans
 - 9) how to raise money
 - 10) how to petition
 - 11) how to canvass by phone and door-to-door
 - 12) how to keep databases of members and supporters
 - 13) how to communicate regularly with members and supporters
 - 14) how to build relationships and solidarity with communities and constituencies under-represented in the local

7. Getting there from here

- A) At the moment these changes cannot be accomplished on the national level. While a number of national committee members, even steering committee members agree with much of or all of this paper, the changes recommended require a good deal of heavy lifting. For example, the current national committee structure includes representatives from the LatinX, black, lavender and other caucuses, artifacts of liberal representationalism whose posts will vanish if these measures are adopted.
- B) Fortunately the Green Party is a federation of state parties. Some state parties will have to take up the challenge and reorganize themselves as internally democratic bodies funded by membership dues, able to hire and supervise their own staff, any one of which may quickly eclipse the national party in size and budget. The first few state parties to get five or ten thousand dues paying members will be laboratories, will show us how this is done, and will begin contending for leadership of the social movement.
- C) Green Party of New York adopted a hybrid membership model, representing organized counties (meeting a minimum level of organization and members) based on both party enrollment and paid members.

8. Sources and suggested further readings

A) History of Political Parties and their Structures

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- 1) The classic analysis of the evolution of political parties is Maurice Duverger's *Political Parties* (1951). Duverger distinguished between elitist parties based on legislative caucuses and wealthy benefactors on the one hand and mass parties based on dues-paying members organized into local branches on the other. The mass parties were developed in the late nineteenth century by working class movements to enable ordinary people to compete for power against wealthy elites. Duverger's *Political Parties* is hard to obtain, but the first part of his *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on the "Political Party" covers the same ground under the headings of "Cadre Parties" and "Mass-based Parties." See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-party>.
- 2) Two good historical analyses for why a working-class-based mass-membership party has not developed in the U.S. like it has in every other industrialized country are John McDermott, *The Crisis of the Working Class and Some Arguments for a New Labor Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1980) and Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the U.S. Working Class* (London: Verso, 1986).
- 3) The first chapter of Art Lipow's *Political Parties and Democracy* (Pluto Press, 1996) covers the turning point in the American left when the Socialist Party tried to sustain a mass-membership party in the early 20th century as Progressive Era leaders of the two-party system were imposing the state-run primary system. The anti-primary, pro-membership convention quote in the outline from the *Socialist Call* in 1914 is from the first chapter of Lipow's book. Art Lipow died in January 2016, but had been active in the Green Party in California.
- 4) The quote from the New York State Assembly's 4,428 page "Revolutionary and Subversive Movements Abroad and at Home" regarding the distinction between American political parties and the Socialist Party of America's "organization" can be found on page 510. The document is online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=CujYAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=nys+assembly+judiciary+committee>
- 5) The quote about the failure of the People's Party to develop a mass-membership structure when it followed the organizational model of the Democrats and Republicans is from Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment* (Oxford University Press, 1978)
- 6) Howie Hawkins' take on why the Green Party movement in the U.S. switched from a mass-membership structure to the top-down structure of Democratic and Republican parties in the late 1990s is on pages 23-26 of his introduction to *Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate* (Haymarket, 2006).

B) The Evolution of US Party Systems

- 1) The wikipedia entry on "Political Parties in the United States" is a good place to start. It provides succinct summaries of the six party systems so far in U.S. history and the sources cited include much of the basic political science literature on this subject.
- 2) See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_parties_in_the_United_States.

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- 3) Two books by Mark Lause, an historian and Green Party supporter in Cincinnati, give vivid accounts of abolitionist and populist era reform movements and third parties.
- 4) *Young America: Land, Labor, and the Republican Community* (Illinois University Press, 2005) covers the pre-Civil War abolition, suffragette, utopian socialist, free labor, and free soil movements and parties.
- 5) *The Civil War's Last Campaign: James B. Weaver, the Greenback-Labor Party & the Politics and Race & Section* (University Press of America, 2001) covers the 1880 Greenback-Labor presidential candidacy of James B. Weaver, who would again carry the farmer-labor populist movement's presidential banner in the better-known 1892 People's Party campaign. The now largely forgotten campaign was a rearguard attempt to restore Radical Reconstruction and defend black political rights and the vanguard of the populists' monetary, labor, and agrarian reform program.
- 6) *Omar Ali's In the Lion's Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (University of Mississippi Press, 2010) recounts the largely forgotten story of the pivotal role played by the Colored Farmers Alliance and Cooperative Union in forcing the southern white National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union to break with the Democrats and join the northern National Farmers Alliance in calling for independent political action and the formation of the People's Party in 1890.

C) The Non-Profit/Industrial Complex

- 1) *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (South End Press, 2009) is collection of essays by radical activists from around the globe analyzing how movement nonprofits have to blunt political goals in order to satisfy government and foundation funders' mandates and exploring how to fund movements from below.
- 2) For contemporary accounts on how progressive movements are steered by Democratic Party-linked funders, see these articles by "The Insider," "the pseudonym of an activist who works inside the Liberal Foundation-Funded Democratic Party-Allied Belly of the Beast:
 - a) "99 Percent Spring: the Latest MoveOn Front for the Democratic Party," <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/03/16/99-percent-spring-the-latest-moveon-front-for-the-democratic-party/>
 - b) "MoveOn's 99 Percent Spring, Obama and the Dems March in Lock-Step," <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/12/moveons-99-percent-spring-obama-and-the-dems-march-in-lock-step/>
 - c) "Inconvenient Truths About Tar Sands Action," <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/24/inconvenient-truths-about-tar-sands-action/>
 - d) "One Big Progressive Cluster-F-k," <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/11/14/one-big-progressive-cluster-f/>
 - e) On the same subject, see these articles by and interview with John Stauber:

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- f) “The Progressive Movement is a PR Front for Rich Democrats,” <http://www.counterpunch.org/2013/03/15/the-progressive-movement-is-a-pr-front-for-rich-democrats/>
 - g) “An Interview With John Stauber on the Impotence of the Progressive Movement,” <http://www.counterpunch.org/2013/04/26/an-interview-with-john-stauber-on-the-impotence-of-the-progressive-movement/>
 - h) Warren Marr offers examples and analysis on the limits of nonprofits in “[Why Nonprofits Can’t Lead the 99%](#),” including comparisons of leadership structures between labor unions and nonprofits, and examinations of what happens when as a result of victories, nonprofits assume some of the function of government agencies and private sector managers.
- 3) An early and extremely prescient analysis of the co-optation of progressive movements by nonprofit funders is Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Anchor Doubleday, 1969; Africa World Press, 1990 reprint). It details how the Ford Foundation and Johnson and Nixon operatives got militant black freedom organizations defunded and “black capitalist” groups funded. It was a model for the pacification of movements by foundation and government funders in the decades that followed.
 - 4) The preface to the second edition of SNCC leader James Foreman's memoir, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Open Hand, 1985), corroborates Allen's analysis with testimony about how Kennedy and Johnson National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, an architect of the escalation in Vietnam, turned to domestic counter-insurgency by convening in 1967, now as head of the Ford Foundation, a meeting of about 20 “moderate” black leaders to lay out plans to destroy SNCC and promote CORE's newfound “black capitalism.” SNCC was aware of this at the time. See James Foreman, “1967: High Tide of Black Resistance,” SNCC International Affairs Office, 1968, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/67_sncc_forman_tide.pdf.
 - 5) Before the rise of the nonprofit industrial complex, left political parties sponsored, organized, and supported social movements. Donald Grubbs' *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (University of Arkansas Press, 2000), recounts how this influential multi-racial sharecroppers' union in the 1930s operated under open sponsorship of the Socialist Party, while drawing on native southern evangelical and populist traditions.
 - 6) Small left parties played pivotal roles in the key strikes in 1934 that led to the rise of industrial unionism under the CIO. The American Workers Party led by A.J. Muste (later a renowned anti-nuclear weapons and anti-Vietnam war activist) played a central role in the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo. Another small left party, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, coordinated the Minneapolis general strike that led to the organization of over-the-road drivers in the trucking industry and the rapid growth of the Teamsters union. A couple of labor history books recount these events include Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, *Labor's Untold Story* (United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, 1979 3rd edition) and Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step* (Pathfinder, 1972).