

Some Thoughts on Independent Political Action

A Discussion of the "National Guardian's" Call for a Third Party

By John Swift

IN THE January 10th issue of the *National Guardian*, there appeared "A Call For Independent Political Action." The "Call" appeared under the signature of John T. McManus, the *Guardian's* Managing Editor and the American Labor Party's 1954 candidate for Governor in the State of New York. The placement of the "Call" on the entire front page, its publication under the banner-head, "A Statement For Discussion by Progressives," the subsequent opening of the columns of the *Guardian* to such a discussion, all leave no doubt that this statement expresses not alone the personal views of McManus, but the official viewpoint of the *Guardian*.

The issues raised in this policy statement are so vitally important to the progressive movement that we propose to devote this article to their discussion. We shall briefly summarize the "Call." In the first place it proposes the formation of a new "national independent political party" to be "on the ballot in the 1956 Presidential elections." This party "must be a party of peace, jobs and rights." The *Guardian* adds: "It must be anti-imperialist

... friendly to world socialism and itself prepared to consider socialist solutions for our own country's welfare." Its formation "cannot wait or expect mass break-aways from presently organized groups such as the labor movement or the Democratic Party. . . . It must be undertaken now" so as to be able to participate "at every level of political argument in the 1956 campaign." Toward this end it proposes the convening of an "open caucus" of all like-minded people to take place no later than Labor Day week, 1955.

These are the concrete proposals of the *Guardian's* "Call."

What are the arguments in favor of such a new party now? The Statement makes five of them:

1) Without candidates on all levels the progressive forces will be blocked from the use of radio, TV, and other means of mass communication in the 1956 campaign. Hence the danger exists that no progressive opposition voice will be heard and that the "left of center will have been effectively and perhaps finally silenced in the fight against fascism and war."

2) The proposition that anti-fas-

cists can function effectively as "non-ballot groups" working within the two-party system "has fallen flat in the four years since this strategem has been employed."

3) There is no mass peace movement in this country "despite all efforts at regrouping and new forms which have decimated the Progressive Party of 1948."

4) The support of "liberals" for "their apparent 'anti-McCarthy' attitudes" has not won a single commitment in Congress against the Smith and McCarran Acts. Of the "dozens of Congressmen and several Senators and governors" who owe their election victory in part to the anti-Republican swing of progressive voters not one has raised his voice against the rearmament of Germany.

5) Even the way in which the question of "peaceful coexistence" has been placed for discussion before the American people in recent weeks is false and will lead nowhere, for it does not rest on the enlightened view that "more acceptable ideas than capitalism are sweeping the world and in time coming our way." Thus there is nothing to be gained from this current discussion.

Do the forces exist to fulfill this task? This question is answered in the affirmative. The forces which made up the "great Progressive mobilization of 1948" can be rallied again and with them many additional ones. "All the elements for this are at hand," writes McManus,

"only the imagination seems to be lacking. Can we stir this imagination again, as we only began to stir it in 1948?"

These are a summary of the *Guardian's* views on the next steps toward independent political action.

Since we shall take issue with some of Brother McManus' evaluations and conclusions, it is important to make plain at the outset our approach toward the *Guardian* and its editors. The *Guardian* is a non-Communist progressive weekly. It was born in 1948 during the upsurge of the newly formed Progressive Party and as an independent voice of that movement. In 1950, when Henry Wallace betrayed the cause of peace, the *Guardian*, to its everlasting credit, stood its ground and refused to be browbeaten or panicked into support of the Korean War. Its record has been that of a staunch fighter for peace, civil liberties, Negro and labor rights. It bravely came to the defense of the Rosenbergs, has resolutely stood for friendship with the Soviet Union, and even when in disagreement with the Communist Party has fought for its rights and recognized in it a progressive force. Thus it has lived up to the best traditions of American radical-progressive journalism. For these reasons the *Guardian* has well earned the hatred of reaction. For the same reasons the Communists wish the *Guardian* well, recognizing it as a progressive ally in the fight.

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It is necessary to point out that while the *Guardian's* statement is entitled, "A Call for Independent Political Action," the platform for such action stands on only one leg: the formation of a new party by 1956. This is the be-all and end-all of the *Guardian's* views on what needs to be done to further the cause of independent political action.

Nothing is said about the crucial immediate battles to influence the course of events *before* the 1956 election. Nothing is said about the urgent need for intensified independent political action *now*, in the form of *organized mass pressure* upon the present Administration and Congress. This is not accidental. It flows logically from the reasoning of the "Call" itself. McManus and the *Guardian* apparently see no possibility of influencing the immediate course of events and nothing to be gained from political pressure upon Washington. Thus, independent political action today is made wholly synonymous with but one act—the immediate organizational crystallization of a new party. And this new party is to spring, not out of the natural fertility of increased mass activity and struggle around immediate issues, but full grown, like Minerva from the brow of Jupiter.

McManus places single-minded emphasis upon the need to form a new party without awaiting mass break-aways of labor and other "presently organized groups" from the two-party system. This explains, in

our opinion, why nothing was said about how to further the independent political action of organized labor.

For the sake of argument, let us concede the need for such a party even without labor's support. Would this preclude the need for special attention to organized labor? Would we not also have the task of working *with* and *within* the ranks of organized labor to promote the cause of political independence? The *Guardian* does not deal with this problem at all. How important it is we shall have occasion to emphasize later.

What kind of party is McManus proposing? He leaves us a bit confused on this score. Does he favor a broad people's coalition party based on a common united front program for "peace, jobs and rights" and directed against the economic and political dominance of monopoly, or does he favor a still more programmatically advanced, more Left, socialist-type party? Apparently he himself has not made up his mind. In the very first paragraph of the "Call" he says that the new party "must be anti-imperialist, friendly to world socialism and itself prepared to consider socialist solutions for our own country's welfare." Thus he is advocating the formation of an anti-capitalist, pro-socialist party. But elsewhere in the statement he refers to the new party as "an independent people's coalition."

It is no small matter that John

McManus and the other editors of the *Guardian* are thinking of more fundamental socialist solutions to the problems of our country. This is another proof that despite all the hysterical attempts of the ruling class to exorcise socialist ideas from the masses, these are bound to grow, for they represent the truth and are being attested to by all the myriad currents of life. And if the *Guardian's* editors are thinking along these lines, this is a further tribute to both their wisdom and courage.

But we are still puzzled over the character of the party proposed. It cannot be for "socialist solutions" and still be a "people's coalition" party. At least, not in the present stage of struggle in this country. A "people's coalition," if that phrase has any meaning at all for today, must be a combination of diverse class and social groupings, which, irrespective of differing ideologies, unite to advance a common, agreed-upon program. Any "people's coalition" which is not that is a misnomer.

But can a broad coalition party be formed without the backing of at least an important section of the organized labor movement? Since the rise of the monopolies and even prior to the turn of the century, there have been repeated third-party efforts to topple the Big Business dominated two-party system. These have invariably failed to accomplish this end. They were essentially rural and urban middle-class movements,

lacking deep roots in the ranks of the workers. Even when the La Follette movement of 1924 did get the backing of organized labor, this was not a long range decision to pursue a new path of political independence. Thus, these movements, from the Populists on, flashed like meteors across the political skies, and then just as rapidly died away. History has demonstrated that the only class capable of heading up a great people's movement against the rule of monopoly is the organized working class. Every third party movement which is not so based is doomed to failure.

Nor is there any sense in gnashing our teeth in impotent rage at the treasonable role of the labor officialdom which plays no small part in keeping labor tied to Big Business politics. It is necessary to devise the practical steps and actions by which to propel labor forward toward ever greater political independence. While *complete* political independence requires a new party, *greater* political independence can be attained short of that goal and on the way to it. Not to see the small embryonic beginnings of such independence in the political action movement of organized labor today is to fail to see tomorrow's man in today's child. It also fails to grasp the conditions under which the ruling class was able to placate the workers with economic bribes. It does not see the new period ahead in which the intense market crisis of American

capitalism will make this less and less possible. To try to build a great new coalition party without labor and against its will is like trying to build a modern skyscraper without steel and concrete girders.

It is of course possible that Brother McManus is not thinking of a "people's coalition" party at all. He may be thinking of a more restricted socialist electoral combination. This he may believe is necessary to make up for the abandonment of that field by the Socialist Party and the inability of the Communist Party, due to reactionary laws and practices, to get on the ballot in most states. If so, this would be a brand new proposal and should be considered on its merits. But this should not be confused with a "people's coalition" party.

It is clear that a great majority of people are not at this time prepared "to consider socialist solutions for our own country's welfare." A program of independent political action cannot be limited, therefore, to those who believe in such solutions. It must have as its aim the rallying of a new progressive majority of the American people to influence the *immediate* course of events to prevent war and fascism. Hence the placing of a socialist ticket in the field, if that is what is intended, cannot be seen as the over-all answer to the problem of building a people's coalition.

What explains McManus' lack of clarity regarding the character of

the new party advocated? A real people's party, a labor-farmer party, must base itself upon the mass movement of the people and in the first place upon organized labor. But such a party is not emerging at this time. The masses are still expressing themselves through the medium of the two old parties. McManus is convinced, however, that without a national third party nothing can be accomplished to prevent fascism and war. He fears that to wait until labor is prepared to take this path may be too late. Thus, out of a feeling of desperation, the *Guardian* seeks to build this "people's coalition" party, single-handed, even if it is doomed at the outset to be a narrow grouping without a mass following.

The contradiction in the McManus position, is, therefore, the contradiction between the belief that nothing can be accomplished without a new party and the inability to achieve such. It is the contradiction between what is deemed necessary and what is deemed possible.

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At the root of the *Guardian's* position lies the deeply held view that the present situation in the country cannot be altered for the better without the emergence of a new party. This underlies all McManus' arguments.

His first argument is that independent candidates are needed if the progressives are to have access to the public forum of 1956. Having candi-

dates in the field would undoubtedly make it easier to obtain the use of such mediums as radio and TV and thereby to reach the people with the real issues. Candidates in and by themselves, however, do not necessarily mean reaching the ears of the masses. The Socialist-Labor Party sect, for example, has had a presidential candidate on the ballot for many years, but it does not reach the ears of the people. Its political pitch is inaudible to them.

Furthermore, even when there was a Progressive Party presidential ticket in the field in 1952, this did not result in reaching the ears of the millions. As McManus knows from his own experience in the recent New York campaign, the mere running of a candidate does not guarantee full access to the political debate, even if his candidacy did make a notable contribution in helping clarify the issues.

We can appreciate the *Guardian's* concern as to whether the progressive voice will be heard in 1956. This still does not explain its total emphasis upon the early formation of a new party. After all, American experience gives many instances of intervention in political life by independently organized groupings short of full-fledged political parties. The Citizens' P.A.C., the A.D.A., the various non-partisan leagues, are examples of this.

To place sole stress upon a new party and upon the need for candidates "on all possible levels," is to

argue not only for candidates through whom the progressive voice can be heard. It is to argue for a sectarian go-it-alone policy. This, in effect, says that it does not matter a farthing which candidates of the old parties get elected, that candidates must be placed in the field against as many of them as possible.

The next argument of McManus makes this go-it-alone position even clearer. It declares that anti-fascists cannot influence the struggle within the old parties and that the attempt to do so "has fallen flat in the four years since this strategem has been employed."

As to whether it is possible to influence the masses who support these parties and therefore the struggle within them, we shall touch on a bit later. At this point we are curious which "four years" period McManus means. The simple facts are that as late as two years ago, in the 1952 election, the supporters of the Progressive Party, *including the Communists*, pursued a narrow, rigid, third-party line. This brought them into head-on collision with the organized labor and Negro people's movements. This policy made no distinction whatever between old parties and their candidates, despite the fact that open pro-fascists such as McCarthy and Jenner were running. It plunked almost exclusively for the candidates of the Progressive Party (American Labor Party in New York). The result of that election was interpreted widely as a victory

for McCarthyism and a mandate for the country to go even further to the Right.

McManus apparently has missed the lessons of the 1952 campaign. If there is any ground to his charge that the tactics since then have "fallen flat," this must be doubled in spades for the sectarian go-it-alone tactics of 1952!

The third argument even further reveals the same thinking. McManus cites the lack of a mass peace movement in the country as additional indication that nothing can be done without a new party. But if there is no organized mass peace movement, this could be adduced to prove the opposite—that the time is not ripe to form a third party. But Brother McManus does not see it that way. He argues that the very attempts to form an organized peace movement "have decimated the Progressive Party of 1948."

There can be only one explanation for this reasoning. McManus apparently considers the peace issue in the country as no broader than that of a third party. Hence, for him, the very attempts to build a broader separate peace movement could only be at the expense of the Progressive Party.

Doesn't this stand things on their head? The issue of peace is by no means identical with that of a third party. It is an issue which transcends all political alignments. Peace forces exist *in all parties*. It is the job of the progressive forces to learn

how to work with them, to help make them more articulate and to raise their level of understanding. It is necessary to seek out constantly the best possible forms through which this peace sentiment can find expression. This may not result in a single unified and organized mass movement, but in multiple mass efforts, around specific peace issues, all of which play their part in pressing for a change in foreign policy.

The breadth of the peace sentiment in the country was eloquently shown in the recent election campaign, when President Eisenhower demagogically made his main pitch on this issue. To see the attempts at building a broader and more effective peace movement as in opposition to that of laying the foundations for a third party, or to see the issue of peace as synonymous with that of support for the Progressive Party, is strange thinking indeed. The *real reasons* for the decline of the Progressive Party since 1948 will have to be sought elsewhere.

Argument number four is in many respects McManus' strongest. Here he marshal's evidence to "prove" his contention that the tactics pursued in the 1954 elections have "fallen flat," and that the issue before us is: a third party, now—or else! He shows that despite support given to "liberal" candidates for their "apparent 'anti-McCarthy' attitudes," not a single commitment was won against

the Smith and McCarran Acts. Furthermore, he says, even where Congressmen were elected with the aid of progressive voters, neither the cause of peace nor democracy was strengthened thereby. If anything, things seem to be getting worse. Brownell is pressing for even harsher repressive measures, and Dulles for the same suicidal war course.

How much truth is there in these assertions? It is probably true that not a single commitment has been obtained for the repeal of the Smith and McCarran Acts. It is also true that there is a grave danger of even more repressive legislation passing in this session of Congress. Nor has any Congressman or Senator as yet spoken out against the rearmament of Germany.

But is this all that needs to be said? If so, how can one explain the post-election CIO Convention declaration that, "Now is the time for a counter-attack on the civil liberties front?" The CIO likewise demanded that "all federal legislation limiting what people can think and say be removed from the statute books." Is this call for a "counter-attack" accidental? By no means!

Something new did occur in the 1954 elections which makes its results somewhat different from those of 1952. As we have already said, the 1952 election was interpreted widely as a victory for McCarthyism and a popular mandate to go to the

extreme Right. This cannot be said of the 1954 election results. While these cannot be interpreted as a mandate for a swing to the Left, it cannot be denied that McCarthyism received its first major electoral rebuff. This was an unmistakable expression of the nation's growing disgust with the sickening anti-Communist hysteria of the post-war years. It is, therefore, a new fact and one of considerable importance.

Thus, the results of the 1954 election did have something to do with the stand of the CIO Convention. Had the results of the election been otherwise, had the open McCarthyites swept the field as in 1952, the chances are that the CIO leadership would have pulled in its horns even further instead of calling for a "counter-attack."

Whether such a counter-attack really takes place, whether it begins to check the destruction of the Bill of Rights remains to be seen. Much, very much, depends on what is done now, after the elections, to mount the greatest degree of mass pressure.

The 84th Congress is also a reactionary, Big Business dominated one. To see this fact alone is to draw the negative conclusion that nothing can be done until a new and different type of Congress is elected. It is necessary to see that the 84th Congress can be made more responsive to the will of the people. This depends upon a strengthened, more

conscious and more united mass struggle. After all, the 83rd Congress started out as one completely dominated by McCarthy. It ended up by convening a special session to reprimand McCarthy! The importance of this should not be exaggerated. Neither should it be minimized. It only proves that some new winds are blowing and that where mass pressure can be mounted its effects can be felt even upon a reactionary Congress and Administration.

We have said that the election result did not represent a swing to the Left. Was such a development possible in 1954? To a certain extent, yes. It was possible for example, to compel more candidates to take a stand on the issues of peace, civil liberties and Negro rights. If this did not take place on a large enough scale, one of the main reasons is that the *full weight* of the *conscious* peace and progressive forces was not thrown on to the election scales. There was still too much passive sitting on the side lines, too much shoulder-shrugging, too many Leftist excuses that "it makes no difference who wins," "nothing can be done until a third party emerges," "the Communist Control Act means that fascism is already here," etc. Thus, not every opportunity was seized for working with other progressive forces and for generating mass pressure on the vital issues before the

nation. And we make this criticism not alone of some of the followers of the *Guardian*, but in *self-criticism* of many Communists as well.

Another development which could have been interpreted as a popular swing to the Left would have been an overwhelming Democratic sweep. Such a sweep was precluded by the very nature of the Democratic Party campaign. This blurred and confused the issues before the nation and even enabled Eisenhower to once again demagogically don a peace mantle.

However, even within this overall state of affairs a mandate for a new course in foreign and domestic policies could have made itself felt more. This would have occurred had those few candidates who were identified in the public mind with more progressive domestic and foreign policies been elected. We refer in particular to Condon in California and Taylor in Idaho. A victory for Condon would have been a powerful blow at the witch-hunt. A victory for Taylor would have aroused the nation to a realization that a basic change in foreign policy was being demanded. The reactionary forces in both old parties understood this very well. That is why they joined hands to defeat them, as they did Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., in New York. The question to be asked is: Did all progressives understand it as well?

It is important to note, however,

that even in defeat these candidates showed tremendous strength. Condon came very close to election despite everything thrown at him. As for Taylor, the mere fact that he was able to win the state Democratic Party primary is indicative of a changing atmosphere within the country. After all, only six years ago he was the Progressive Party's Vice-Presidential Candidate!

Thus, it is false to assume that because no third party is in the field, election results have no significance. They have significance. In fact, without winning victories within the primaries of the old parties, without the election of more pronounced progressive-minded candidates, it will be impossible to prepare the way for a more basic political regrouping.

Let us touch on another aspect of this problem. What about those candidates who promised to pursue a progressive course when running for election but who now conveniently forget their promises? This has happened in a number of instances with men elected last November. During the campaign these were compelled to speak out in behalf of civil liberties, for a peaceful negotiation of world differences, for Negro rights, etc. Yet these same congressmen either shamefully voted in support of the President's war-like declaration on Formosa, or abstained.

If this occurred we must ask ourselves: Is it not true that even where organized pressure compelled com-

mitments *before* election day, the same kind of pressure was not continued *after* November 2nd? But the McCarthy-Knowland "war-now" crowd never relents its pressure!

Only when pre-election work is carried over into even more intensive post-election activity can we help transform promises into deeds. This is a lesson that must be learned and before the new congress gets much older. The struggle that developed in the Senate over the President's Formosa declaration is an indication that the time is becoming ripe for breaking the solid congressional front on foreign policy. It is for this reason regrettable that the *Guardian's* call for independent political action had nothing to say about what must be done to influence the actions of Congress this year.

In speaking of candidates who were elected "without Left opposition," McManus writes that this occurred "in most cases with uncritical Left support." It is our judgment that this is too sweeping a charge. In most cases the support was critical and in some cases highly so. But it is not our intention to condone errors made in this direction any more than those in the opposite. We are ready to join with Brother McManus in the sharpest condemnation of all tendencies toward merely "tagging along" with the labor movement in its uncritical support of the Democratic Party and its candidate.

We go even further. We declare that this tendency is an exceedingly

dangerous one. In the name of a mass policy it forgets one simple thing: that it is the duty of all advanced progressives and especially Communists, not merely to work with the political action aims of organized labor and the people's movement, *but to help instill into these new forms a new political content.* This requires bringing greater clarity on the main issues, particularly those of peace, and of exerting a constant, unremitting pressure on labor-endorsed candidates, office holders, and on the political machines. It requires patient and methodical work to win the masses for an understanding that real independent political action necessitates more than a separate electoral apparatus. It necessitates the fight for a more advanced program, for greater labor, Negro, and working farmer representation, and for labor emancipation from dependence upon the Big Business-controlled old party machines.

In our opinion both the tendency of sectarian self-isolation as well as the opportunist "tag along" tendency arise from a certain loss of perspective in face of the acutely difficult and complicated objective conditions. Where these tendencies express themselves in the ranks of Communists, it is because they have not yet been won politically and ideologically for the estimate, line of policy and objectives set forth in the recently adopted Communist Party Program. This Program must be mastered by all Communists and

fought for by them in the ranks of all progressives. It is a Program around which the broadest unity is possible both for today and tomorrow.

It is one thing to oppose uncritical support and to favor independent candidates where necessary, as we do. It is something else entirely to oppose all major party candidates as a matter of principle, as does McManus. The *Guardian's* "Call" makes no distinction between McCarthyism and its opponents. But a distinction must be made, even for those "liberals" whose abject cowardice has strengthened McCarthyism. Let us excoriate these as they deserve, but let us not throw them all into the same basket.

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We believe that Brother McManus has not thought through how and by what means the present drive toward fascism and war is to be blocked and then defeated. He apparently fails to recognize that the very nature of the crises confronting the American people—a crisis of their democratic system, a crisis in foreign policy, and an approaching economic crisis, must inevitably, and are already, creating rifts and cleavages in what has, up to now, appeared as one solid reactionary front. To fail to see these differences, to fail to take advantage of them in the fight for peace and democracy is shortsighted. Of course, there is always the danger of exaggerating

these differences and their significance. There is always the danger of wishful thinking which tends to see a wide chasm in every narrow crack. But even a tiny crack is of some importance and must be utilized in order to drive a wedge between the most extreme pro-war and pro-fascist forces and the rest of America.

The difference between Brother McManus' approach and our own can be seen by his fifth argument about "peaceful coexistence." We certainly agree with him that Eisenhower does not really want such coexistence. But this is not the same as seeing no significance in the fact that Eisenhower was forced to open a national debate on this issue. Nor can we agree with McManus when he makes the acceptance of peaceful coexistence identical with the acceptance of the "enlightened views" that capitalism is on the way out. To put this stress is to destroy the very meaning of the concept of peaceful coexistence.

This concept means nothing more or less than the possibility of different social systems existing side by side without entering into armed conflict. The great majority of Americans can accept this even if they still believe in American capitalism and that it is not on the way out. Thus something positive can emerge from the current mass discussion over this question. That is why the McCarthys and Knowlands so fear this debate.

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McManus desires to build a strong progressive movement that would reverse the reactionary trend in the country. But this, in our opinion, can never be done by viewing the Left-progressives as the ship and all else as the sea. The launching of a third-party ship at this time, no matter how ably manned, cannot bring the American people to their immediate haven. If victory in the present fight depends upon that prospect, then there is indeed little hope of gaining it. But it is our view that victory can be won and it is our determination to win it. For this reason we refuse to go along with "last stands" which consciously or unconsciously are predicated on the perspective of defeat.

If our policy as pursued in the recent election has "fallen flat," let us ask what would have been the outcome had a go-it-alone, run-candidates-all-along-the-line, policy been pursued? In the first place, it would have meant lumping all major party candidates together, regardless of whether they were labor backed, whether they were Negroes, whether they were open McCarthyites, or men with "anti-McCarthy attitudes." Second, it would have meant that where the Left-progressives could help determine the election outcome the most reactionary candidates would have won.

This would have strengthened the most extreme pro-fascist "war-now" forces in Congress and the nation. On top of this it would have widened

the breach between the Left-progressive forces and organized labor, the Negro people and the low-income groups generally. These fear extreme reaction and, whether we like it or not, do distinguish between most Republican and Democratic Party candidates.

Nor would the result for the third party have been a happy one. The vote would have been exceedingly small, because it would have run counter to the main mass current and the fear of Republican McCarthyite reaction. Furthermore, it would have dug an even deeper moat separating the conscious progressives from the great mass of workers and farmers who must be won by them. Lastly, it would have hurt and discredited the very cause of a people's third party. It would have made it easier for the labor and other reformists to "prove" that a third-party movement is something "impractical" and "utopian" and that the present two-party system is ordained to last forever.

It is our opinion that the tactical line pursued by the Communists in the recent election was a sound one and represented the application on a nation-wide scale of the lessons learned from the 1952 elections. Recognizing that both parties represented the interests of Big Business, our Party endeavored to influence the outcome of the election so that the most reactionary forces would suffer defeat. We strove to articulate the will of the people, to bring for-

ward the main issues, to strengthen the unity of labor with its allies, the Negro people, the working farmers, and the city middle classes. Through these means we sought to lay the basis for defeating the drive toward war and fascism, for electing a new Administration in 1956, and for the emergence of a new progressive coalition leading toward the eventual formation of a great new party of labor and its allies.

McManus believes that there is one simple explanation for the decline in the Progressive Party vote since 1948—the lack of will to build it. Were he referring to the will of the masses we could agree with him. But his reference is elsewhere. It is to those in the conscious progressive camp who have, according to him, "decimated the Progressive Party."

Let us see. The Progressive Party was formed in 1948 not merely because someone had a "good idea." It arose as a result of an intense struggle between forces both outside of and within the Democratic Party. During 1947 and the early part of 1948 it appeared as if a permanent break had occurred between organized labor and the Truman Administration. Truman had broken the railroad and steel strikes. Alongside of this development there also occurred an extremely sharp collision over foreign policy. This found its reflection even within the President's Cabinet and within the high councils of the Democratic Party. In fact it was felt in every important mass

movement of that day—the labor movement, the Negro people's movement, the Farmers Union, the Citizens' PAC, the Committee on the Arts, Sciences and Professions, etc. The leader of the fight within the Democratic Party and before the masses was Henry Wallace, former Vice President under Roosevelt and head of the Department of Commerce in Truman's Cabinet.

McManus casts covetous glances backward at the year 1948 as the year of the millenium to which he wants to return. Let him, however, give consideration to these objective and subjective factors which made possible the Progressive Party upsurge of that year. If he does, he will soon realize that it *is* possible to influence the course of the struggle within the old parties, for it was so influenced in 1947 and 1948. Furthermore he will realize that the "imagination" which stirred in 1948 was not some dainty hothouse plant which can be made to bloom under artificial conditions. It was a robust outdoor wild flower, whose seeds were spread throughout the land by the mighty winds of intense controversy over foreign and domestic policy.

What appeared in early 1948 as the makings of a big-break-away from the two-party system did not so materialize. The reactionary labor leadership patched up its differences with the Truman Administration. Truman, the artful showman, made more than one political handspring

in order to steal the show—and the votes—from Wallace.

Without passing judgment at this time as to whether the 1948 third-party venture was premature or not, one thing is as clear as daylight—there have been no visible signs of a break-away since then. We cannot here go into the various reasons for this. Suffice it to say that the *main* explanation for the constant decline in the Progressive Party vote is to be found in this fact and not in a "lack of imagination." And yet, McManus writes that "All the elements for this [new party] are at hand; only the imagination seems to be lacking." If only it were so!

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It therefore follows that while we laud the motives and determination of the *Guardian* to achieve the goal of a third party, we are convinced that the forces do not now exist for anything but an abortive attempt in that direction.

We agree with the great importance of guaranteeing that the voices of the conscious progressives are heard in the "political argument of 1956." However, we do not agree that this requires a go-it-alone, narrow third-party policy. We are convinced that such a policy would only weaken these voices and their influence in the land.

It is also our opinion that the conscious progressive forces must not permit themselves to be cut off from the great mass of organized labor,

despite all the efforts of the reactionary labor leaders to accomplish this. Everything should be done to further the cause of united labor action and organic unity. Everything should be done to advance labor's political action; to further unite labor's political action efforts; and to coordinate these with those of the NAACP, the Farmers' Union, the ADA, and other liberal and progressive groups. Efforts to convince the ranks of labor of the need for an all-labor political action congress are of great importance. This should be convened early enough to influence the 84th Congress and the platforms and candidates for 1956.

Above all else, it is necessary that conscious progressives use initiative and imagination in stimulating the immediate struggles of the people for a greater relaxation of world tension, for civil liberties, for Negro equality, and for jobs and economic security.

It is in the struggles around these issues and in building an ever-mounting pressure upon the Administration and Congress, that the answer to 1956 and to a more fundamental political regrouping will be found.

In the course of these struggles it is necessary to unite the ranks of the conscious progressives around immediate and long-term perspectives. It is particularly necessary to double and triple the circulation of literature and newspapers which bring to the people the truth about the Soviet Union, about Socialism and about the Communist Party.

We are convinced that in these efforts, and despite momentary differences over immediate perspective and tactics, we shall continue to march together with Brother McManus and the *Guardian* in friendship and cooperation.