Interpretations of American Politics

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This book presents a series of novel essays on some recent political history, notably an examination of the “new American right” which had concentrated for a time around the leadership of Senator McCarthy, and which continues today in large, if inchoate, form. This is not, however, a book about Senator McCarthy, although two of the essays, by Talcott Parsons and S. M. Lipset, offer some fresh insights into the flashfire spread of McCarthyism. McCarthyism, or McCarthywasm, as one wit put it, may be a passing phenomenon. This book is concerned not with these transiencies, but with the deeper-running social currents of a turbulent mid-century America.
This is a turbulence born not of depression, but of prosperity. Contrary to the somewhat simple notion that prosperity dissolves all social problems, we see that prosperity brings in its wake new social groups, new social strains and new social anxieties. Conventional political analysis, drawn largely from eighteenth and nineteenth century American experience, cannot fathom these new social anxieties nor explain their political consequences.

This book, by establishing a new framework, attempts to provide an understanding of these new social problems. This framework is derived from an analysis of the exhaustion of liberal and left-wing political ideology, and by an examination of the new, prosperity-created "status-groups" which, in their drive for recognition and respectability, have sought to impose older conformities on the American body politic. This framework, drawn from some of the more recent thought in sociology and social psychology, represents a new and original contribution which, we feel, extends the range of conventional political analysis. To an extent, this is a "thesis book." It does not present a "total" view of politics nor does it supplant the older categories of political analysis, but it does add a new and necessary dimension to the analysis of American society today. Equally important, and of more immediate relevance perhaps, the application of these concepts may allow us not only to understand some puzzling aspects of the last decade, but also to illuminate the sub-rosa political forces of 1956 and beyond.

Politics in the United States has been looked at, roughly, from three standpoints: the role of the electoral structure, of democratic tradition, and of interest groups, sectional or class.

Perhaps the most decisive fact about politics in the United States is the two-party system. Each party is like some huge bazaar, with hundreds of hucksters clamoring
for attention. But while life within the bazaars flows freely and licenses are easy to obtain, all trading has to be conducted within the tents; the ones who hawk their wares outside are doomed to few sales. This fact gains meaning when we consider one of the striking facts about American life: America has thrown up countless social movements, but few political parties; in contradiction to European political life, few of the social movements have been able to transform themselves into political parties. Here is one source of flux yet stability in American life.

"It is natural for the ordinary American," wrote Gunnar Myrdal, "when he sees something that is wrong to feel not only that there should be a law against it, but also that an organization should be formed to combat it,"—and, we might add, to change it. American reform groups have ranged from Esperantists to vegetarians, from silver money advocates to conservationists, from trust-busters to socialists of fifty-seven varieties. These groups, intense and ideologically single-minded, have formed numerous third parties—the Greenback Party, Anti-Monopoly Party, Equal Rights Party, Prohibition Party, Socialist Labor Party, Union Labor Party, Farmer-Labor Party, Socialist Party. Yet none succeeded.

The wheat farmers of the north central plains have a homogeneity of cultural outlook and a common set of economic problems which national boundary lines cannot bisect. Yet in Canada, the wheat farmers formed a Social Credit Party in Alberta and a Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan, while their brothers in North Dakota could only, at best, form a Non-Partisan League within the Republican Party in order to press their interests.¹

These factors of rigid electoral structure have set definite limits on the role of protest movements, left and right, in American life. ("Let me make the deals, and I care not who makes the ideals," an American politician
has said.) They account in significant measure for the failure of the Lemke-Coughlin movement in 1936, and the Wallace-Progressive Party in 1948. They account for the new basic alliance between the unions and the Democratic Party. Whatever lingering hopes some trade unionists may have held for a labor party in the United States were dispelled by Walter Reuther at the C.I.O. convention in November 1954 when, in answering transport leaders such as Mike Quill, he pointed out that a third party was impossible within the nature of the United States electoral system. This is a lesson that every social movement has learned. And any social movement which hopes to effect or resist social change in the United States is forced now to operate within one or the other of the two parties. This factor alone will place an enormous strain on these parties in the next ten years.

The democratic tradition, the second of the interpretive categories, has played an important role in shaping American political forms. The distinctive aspect of the political tradition in the United States is that politics is the arena of the hoi polloi. Here the “common man” becomes the source of ultimate appeal if not authority. This was not so at the beginning. The “founding fathers,” with the Roman republic, let alone the state of affairs under the Articles of Confederation, in mind, feared the “democratic excesses” which the poor and propertyless classes could wreak against those with property. Whatever the subsequent inadequacies of the economic interpretation of history in a complex society, it is clear that in 1787 self-consciousness of property, and a desire to limit the electoral role of the people, were uppermost in the minds of the “four groups of personality interests which had been adversely affected under the Articles of Confederation: money, public securities, manufactures, and trade and shipping.” This was reflected in the precautions written into the Constitution: a non-popular Senate, selected by
the States; an appointive judiciary holding office for life, and a President elected through the indirect and cumbersome means of an electoral college.

But these barriers soon broke down. The victory of the Jeffersonians was the first step in the establishment of a "populist" character for the American democracy. The Federalists, seeing the success of the Jeffersonian methods, realized the necessity of imitating those "popular, convivial and charitable techniques." As early as 1802, Hamilton, in a letter to Bayard, outlined a plan for a "Christian Constitutional Society," which would appeal to the masses "through a development of a 'cult' of Washington and benevolent activities." A Washington Benevolent Society was formed in 1808, but it was too late, the Federalists had already lost. Thirty years later their spiritual descendants, the Whigs, beat the Democrats at their own game. Casting aside Henry Clay, whose "Hamiltonian" views were too well-established, the Whigs nominated General William Henry Harrison, the hero of the battle of Tippecanoe, against Andrew Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren.

"If General Harrison is taken up as a candidate," said Nicholas Biddle, the former head of the National Bank, in some direction to party managers (which might not have echoed so strangely in 1952), "it will be on account of the past. . . . Let him say not one single word about his principles, or his creed—let him say nothing—promise nothing. Let no Committee, no convention—no town meeting ever extract from him a single word about what he thinks or will do hereafter. Let the use of pen and ink be wholly forbidden."

The "cider election" of 1840 was a turning-point in American political life. Harrison traveled from place to place in a large wagon with a log cabin on top, and a barrel of hard cider on tap for the crowds. Daniel Webster, with the fustian of the demagogue, expressed deep
regret that he had not been born in a log cabin, although his elder siblings had begun their lives in a humble abode. Whig orators berated Van Buren for living in a lordly manner, accusing him of putting cologne on his whiskers, eating from gold plate, and of being “laced up in corsets such as women in town wear and if possible tighter than the best of them.”

The lesson was clear. Politics as a skill in manipulating masses became the established feature of political life, and the politician, sometimes a front-man for the moneyed interests, but sometimes the manipulator in his own right, came to the fore. Increasingly, the upper classes withdrew from direct participation in politics. The lawyer, the journalist, the drifter, finding politics an open ladder of social mobility, came bounding up from the lower middle classes. The tradition of equality had been established. The politician had to speak to “the people” and in democratic terms.

If the politician spoke to the people, he acted for “interests.” The awareness of the interest-group basis of politics, the third of the categories, goes far back to the early days of the republic. Madison, in the oft-quoted Number Ten of the Federalist Papers, had written, “the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society.” James Harrington’s maxim that “power always follows property,” “I believe to be as infallible a maxim in politics, as that action and reaction are equal in mechanics,” said John Adams, the outstanding conservative of the time. The threat to property on the part of the small farmer and the landless formed the basis of the first disquiet in American politics. The Shaysites in Massachusetts and other insurgents, General Henry Knox complained to George Washington, “believe that the property of the United States has been
protected from the confiscations of Britain by the joint exertions of all.” Madison, looking to the future, anticipated that “a great majority of the people will not only be without land, but any other sort of property.” When this has occurred, he predicted, the propertyless masses will “either combine under the influence of their common situation; in which case the rights of property and the public liberty will not be secure in their hands; or what is more probable,” he continued, with the lessons of the Roman demagogues in mind, “they will become tools of opulence and ambition, in which case, there will be equal danger on the other side.”

The early factional struggles in American political life, rustic in form because of the agrarian weight of the population, soon became sectional. This was inevitable since the different regions developed different interests: the rice, tobacco and cotton of the South; the fishing, lumber, commerce of New England. National parties came into being when the Federalists succeeded at first in combining the large planters of the upper and lower South with the commercial interests of the North Atlantic region, and when Jefferson challenged this combination by uniting the grain growers and other small farmers both North and South into a rival party. Since then, the national parties have been strange alliances of heterogeneous sectional groups: Midwest farmers with the populist, Democratic and Republican parties; the urban immigrant North with the backward, nativist South. Ethnic and functional groups have, often by historic accident, flowed into one of the two parties: the Negroes, because of the Civil War, for sixty years or so voted Republican; the Irish, because of their original relation to Tammany Hall, became Democrats; the Germans, settling in the Midwest, became Republican; the urban Italians, in reaction to their exclusion by the Irish, became Republican.

Within the sectionalism of American political life, arose
the narrower, more flexible tactic of the pressure group standing outside the particular party, committed to neither, giving support or winning support on the basis of allegiance to the single issue alone. One of the first skillful innovators of this tactic was George Henry Evans, a confrère of Robert Owen and a leading figure for a time in the reform politics of the 1830s and '40s. Evans had been one of the leaders of the Workingmen's Party in 1829, a New York party that began with moderate success but which faded when ideological differences inflamed a latent factionalism, and when the Democrats "stole their thunder" by adopting some of their immediate demands. Evans who believed that free land would solve the class tensions and plight of the propertyless workers, organized an Agrarian League in the 1840s. His experience had taught him that a minority party could not win by its own votes and that politicians, interested primarily in "deals not ideals," would endorse any measure advocated by a group that could hold the balance of power. Evans "therefore asked all candidates to support his 'sliding measures.' In exchange for such a pledge, the candidate would receive the votes of the workingmen." While the Agrarian League itself met with middling success, its tactics paid off in the later passage of the Homestead acts.

In 1933, with the arrival of the New Deal, the feeling arose that a new era was emerging. In a widely-quoted book, Professor Arthur N. Holcombe of Harvard wrote: "The old party politics is visibly passing away. The character of the new party politics will be determined chiefly by the interests and attitudes of the urban population. . . . There will be less sectional politics and more class politics." The emergence of "functional" groups, particularly labor, and the growing assertion of ethnic groups, seemed to underscore the shift. The fact that Franklin Roosevelt was able to weave together these groups, some of whom
like the farmers had been allied with the G.O.P., seemed to indicate that some historic realignments were taking place. Some have. The trade union movement, politically articulate for the first time, is outspokenly Democratic; but the working-class vote has usually been Democratic. Ethnic groups which have played a role in politics have, by and large, retained their loyalty to the Democratic Party; but there are many indications that, as a result of rising prosperity and higher social status, significant chunks of these nationality and minority groups are beginning to shift their allegiance. The farmers, despite the enormous supports voted by the New Deal, have returned to the Republican fold.

While sectional politics have somewhat diminished, class politics have not jelled. Elements of both are reflected in the rise of pressure groups and the lobbies. The most spectacular use of the seesaw pressure group tactic was the Anti-Saloon League, which, starting in 1893, was able in two and a half decades to push through a Constitutional amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor in the United States. Since then, the pressure group device has been adopted by thousands of organizations, whether it be for tariff reform, opposition to Federal medical programs, or political aid to the state of Israel. In 1949, the Department of Commerce estimated that there were 4,000 national trade, professional, civic and other associations. Including local and branch chapters there were probably 16,000 businessmen's organizations, 70,000 local labor unions, 100,000 women's clubs and 15,000 civic groups carrying on some political education. The enormous multiplication of such groups obviously cancels out many of the threats made to candidates defying one or the other interests. But it makes possible, too, a dextrous art of logrolling, which itself makes it possible for small interests to exert great political leverage. Thus, when peanuts were eliminated from a farm subsidy
program in 1955, over one hundred Southern congressmen held up a crop support bill until the subsidy was restored. (Although Georgia peanuts account for less than one half of one percent of farm income, subsidizing this crop has cost the U.S. 100 million dollars in the past decade.)

The multiplication of interests and the fractioning of groups make it difficult to locate the sources of power in the United States.\textsuperscript{11} This political fractioning, occurring simultaneously with the break-up of old property forms and the rise of new managerial groups to power within business enterprises, spells the break-up, too, of older ruling classes in the United States. A ruling class may be defined as a power-holding group that has both an established community of interest and continuity of interest. One can be a member of the "upper class" (i.e. have greater privilege and wealth and be able to transmit that wealth) without being a member of the ruling group. The modern ruling group is a coalition whose modes of continuity, other than the political route as such, are still ill-defined.\textsuperscript{12} More than ever, government in the United States has become in John Chamberlain’s early phrase, "the broker state." To say this is a broker state, however, does not mean that all interests have equal power. This is a business society. But within the general acceptance of corporate capitalism, modified by union power and checked by government control, the deals and interest-group trading proceed.

Granting the usefulness of these frames of political analysis—the role of electoral structure in limiting social movements and social clashes; the tradition of popular appeal; and the force of interest-groups in shaping and modifying legislative policy—in understanding "traditional" political problems, they leave us somewhat ill-equipped to understand the issues which have dominated political dispute in the last decade. These categories do
not help us understand the Communist issue, the forces behind the new nationalism of say Bricker and Knowland, and the momentary range of support and the intense emotional heat generated by Senator McCarthy.

For Europeans, particularly, the Communist issue must be a puzzle. After all, there are no mass Communist parties in the U.S. such as one finds in France and Italy; the Communist Party in the U.S. never, at any single moment, had more than 100,000 members. In the last five years, when the Communist issue appeared on the national scene, the Communists had already lost considerable political influence and were on the decline—the Communists had been expelled from C.I.O.;\textsuperscript{13} the Progressive Party, repudiated by Henry Wallace, had fizzled; the Communists were losing strength in the intellectual community.

It is true that liberals have tended to play down the issue.\textsuperscript{14} And some rational basis for its existence was present. There was the surprise of the aggression in Korea and the emotional reaction against the Chinese and Russian Communists which carried over to domestic Communists. The disclosures, particularly by Whittaker Chambers, of the infiltration of Communists into high posts in government and the existence of espionage rings, produced a tremendous shock in a nation which hitherto had been unaware of such machinations. People began realizing, too, that numbers alone were no criteria of Communist strength; in fact, thinking of Communist influence on the basis of statistical calculation itself betrayed an ignorance of Communist methods; in the United States the Communists by operating among intellectual groups and opinion leaders have had an influence far out of proportion to their actual numbers. And, finally, the revelations in the Canadian spy investigations, in the Allan Nunn May trial in Britain and in the Rosenberg case that the Soviets had stolen United States atom secrets,
themselves added fuel to the emotional heat against the Communists.

When all of this is said, it still fails to account for the extensive damage to the democratic fabric that McCarthy and others were able to cause on the Communist issue—and for the reckless methods disproportionate to the problem: the loyalty oaths on the campus, the compulsive Americanism which saw threats to the country in the wording of a Girl Scout handbook, the violent clubbing of the Voice of America (which under the ideological leadership of such anti-Communists as Foy Kohler and Bertram Wolfe had conducted intelligent propaganda in Europe), the wild headlines and the senseless damaging of the Signal Corps radar research program at Fort Monmouth—in short the suspicion and the miasma of fear that played so large a role in American politics. Nor does it explain the unchallenged position held so long by Senator McCarthy.

McCarthy himself must be a puzzle to conventional political analysis. Calling him a demagogue explains little; the relevant questions are, to whom was he a demagogue, and about what. McCarthy’s targets were indeed strange. Huey Long, the last major demagogue, had vaguely attacked the rich and sought to “share the wealth.” McCarthy’s targets were intellectuals, Harvard, Anglophiles, internationalists, the Army.

His targets and his language do, indeed, provide important clues to the “radical right” that supported him, and the reasons for that support. These groups constituted a strange mélange: a thin stratum of soured patricians like Archibald Roosevelt, the last surviving son of Teddy Roosevelt, whose emotional stake lay in a vanishing image of a muscular America defying a decadent Europe; the “new rich”—the automobile dealers, real estate manipulators, oil wildcatters—who needed the psychological assurance that they, like their forebears, had earned their own
wealth, rather than accumulated it through government aid, and who feared that “taxes” would rob them of that wealth; the rising middle class strata of the ethnic groups, the Irish and the Germans, who sought to prove their Americanism, the Germans particularly because of the implied taint of disloyalty during World War II; and finally, unique in American cultural history, a small group of intellectuals, many of them cankered ex-Communists, who, pivoting on McCarthy, opened up an attack on liberalism in general.

This strange coalition, bearing the “sword of the Lord and Gideon,” cannot be explained in conventional political terms. These essays do provide some frame, particularly one to explain the “new rich” and the “rising ethnic” groups. One key concept is the idea of “status politics” advanced by Richard Hofstadter. His central idea is that groups that are upwardly mobile (i.e. that are advancing in wealth and social position), are often as anxious and as politically febrile as groups that have become déclassé. Many observers have noted that groups which have lost their social position seek more violently than ever to impose on all groups the older values of a society which they once bore. Hofstadter demonstrates that groups on the rise may insist on a similar conformity in order to establish themselves. This rise takes place in periods of prosperity, when class or economic interest group conflicts have lost much of their force. The new, patriotic issues proposed by the status groups are amorphous and ideological. This theme is elaborated in the essay by Riesman and Glazer, with particular reference to the new rich. But these groups are able to assert themselves, the two sociologists point out, largely because of the exhaustion of liberal ideology—a collapse not from defeat but from “victory.” The essay by Peter Viereck traces some of the historical roots of the peculiar rhetoric of the right, showing the sources of the anti-intellectualism and Anglo-
phobia in the egalitarian populism of the last century. Professor Parsons, discussing the nature of social change in the United States, demonstrates how the resultant social strains foster the emergence of the new right. Glazer and Lipset, analyzing the recent study by Professor Stouffer on "Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties," deal with limitations of "survey methods" in elucidating social attitudes. The long concluding essay by Professor Lipset provides a detailed analysis of the social groups identified with the new right and assesses their strength.

These essays were not written for this volume. All but the reviews of the Stouffer book appeared about the same time, and quite independently. And yet they showed a remarkable convergence in point of view. This convergence itself indicates that some of the recent concepts of sociology and social psychology—the role of status groups as a major entity in American life and status resentments as a real force in politics—were being applied fruitfully to political analysis.

Whether the groups analyzed in this volume form a political force depends upon many factors. Certainly McCarthy himself is, at the moment, at the nadir. By the logic of his own political position, and by the nature of his personality, he had to go to an extreme. And he ended, finally, by challenging Eisenhower. It was McCarthy's great gamble. And he lost, for the challenge to a Republican President by a Republican minority could only have split the party. Faced with this threat, the party rallied behind Eisenhower, and McCarthy himself was isolated. In this respect, the events prove the soundness of the thesis of Walter Lippmann and the Alsops in 1952 that only a Republican President could provide the necessary continuity of foreign and domestic policy initiated and maintained by the Fair Deal. A Democratic President would only have polarized the parties, and given the extreme Republican wing the license to lead the attack;
pseudo-conservative impulse can be found in practically all classes in society, although its power probably rests largely upon its appeal to the less educated members of the middle classes. The ideology of pseudo-conservatism can be characterized but not defined, because the pseudo-conservative tends to be more than ordinarily incoherent about politics. The lady who, when General Eisenhower's victory over Senator Taft had finally become official, stalked out of the Hilton Hotel declaiming, "This means eight more years of socialism" was probably a fairly good representative of the pseudo-conservative mentality. So also were the gentlemen who, at the Freedom Congress held at Omaha over a year ago by some "patriotic" organizations, objected to Earl Warren's appointment to the Supreme Court with the assertion: "Middle-of-the-road thinking can and will destroy us"; the general who spoke to the same group, demanding "an Air Force capable of wiping out the Russian Air Force and industry in one sweep," but also "a material reduction in military expenditures"; the people who a few years ago believed simultaneously that we had no business to be fighting communism in Korea, but that the war should immediately be extended to an Asia-wide crusade against communism; and the most ardent supporters of the Bricker Amendment. Many of the most zealous followers of Senator McCarthy are also pseudo-conservatives, although there are presumably a great many others who are not.

The restlessness, suspicion and fear manifested in various phases of the pseudo-conservative revolt give evidence of the real suffering which the pseudo-conservative experiences in his capacity as a citizen. He believes himself to be living in a world in which he is spied upon, plotted against, betrayed, and very likely destined for total ruin. He feels that his liberties have been arbitrarily and outrageously invaded. He is opposed to almost everything that has happened in American politics for the past twenty
of public morals has been a continuing feature of our history.

The sources of this moralism are varied. This has been a middle-class culture, and there may be considerable truth to the generalization of Svend Ranulf that moral indignation is a peculiar fact of middle-class psychology and represents a disguised form of repressed envy. One does not find moral indignation a feature of the temper of aristocratic cultures. Moralism and moral indignation are characteristic of religions that have largely abandoned other-worldly preoccupations and have concentrated on this-worldly concerns. Religions, like Catholicism, which are focused on heaven are often quite tolerant of man's foibles, weaknesses, and cruelties on earth; theft, after all, is only a venial sin, while pride bears the stain of venality. This is a country, and Protestantism a religion, in which piety has given way to moralism, and theology to ethics. Becoming respectable represents "moral" advancement, and regulating conduct, i.e. being "moral" about it, is a great concern of the Protestant churches in America.

This moralism, itself not unique to America, is linked to an evangelicalism that was largely unique. There has long been a legend, fostered for the most part by literary people, and compounded by sociologists, that America's has been a "puritan" culture. For the sociologists this has arisen out of a mistaken identification of the Protestant ethic with puritan code. The literary critics have been seduced by the myth of New England, and the literary revolt initiated by Van Wyck Brooks which sought to break the hold of puritanism in literature. While puritanism, and the "New England mind," have indeed played a large intellectual role in American life, in the habits and mores of the masses of people, the peculiar evangelicalism of Methodism and Baptism, with its high emotionalism, its fervor, enthusiasm and excitement, its revivalism, its excesses of sinning and of high-voltage confessing, has
played a much more important role in coloring the moral temper of America. Baptism and Methodism have been the American religious creed because they were the rustic and frontier religions. In his page on "Why Americans Manifest a Sort of Fanatical Spiritualism," de Tocqueville observes: "In all states of the Union, but especially in the half-peopled country of the Far West, itinerant preachers may be met with who hawk about the word of God from place to place. Whole families, old men, women and children, cross rough passes and untrodden wilds, coming from a great distance, to join a camp-meeting, where, in listening to these discourses, they totally forget for several days and nights the cares of business and even the most urgent wants of the body."17

The Baptist and Methodist churches grew while the more "respectable" Protestant bodies remained static, precisely because their preachers went on with the advancing frontier and reflected its spirit. "In the camp meeting and in the political gathering logical discourse was of no avail, while the 'language of excitement' called forth an enthusiastic response," observed H. Richard Niebuhr.18

This revivalist spirit was egalitarian and anti-intellectual. It shook off the vestments and the formal liturgies and preached instead the gospel and roaring hymn. This evangelicalism was reflected in the moralism of a William Jennings Bryan, a religious as well as an economic champion of the West, and in the urban revivalism of a Dwight Moody and the Y.M.C.A. movement that grew out of his gospel fervor.19 In their espousal of social reform, the evangelical churches reflected the peculiar influence of moralism. They were the supreme champions of prohibition legislation and Sabbath observance. Reform, in their terms, meant, not as in the New Deal, a belief in welfare legislation, but the redemption of those who had fallen prey to sin—and sin meant drink, loose women and gambling.
This moralism, so characteristic of American temper, had a peculiar schizoid character: it would be imposed with vehemence in areas of culture and conduct—in the censorship of books, the attacks on "immoral art," etc., and in the realm of private habits; yet it was heard only sporadically regarding the depredations of business or the corruption of politics. And yet, this has had its positive side. To the extent that moral indignation—apart from its rhetorical use in political campaigns—played so small a role in the actual political arena, the United States has been able to escape the intense ideological fanaticism—the conflicts of clericalism and class—which has been so characteristic of Europe.

The singular fact about the Communist problem is that an ideological issue was raised in American political life, with a compulsive moral fervor only possible because of the equation of Communism with sin. A peculiar change, in fact, seems to be coming over American life. While we are becoming more relaxed in the area of traditional morals (viz., the Supreme Court ruling against censorship in the case of the movie, The Miracle), we are becoming moralistic and extreme in politics. The fact that Senator McCarthy could seek to pin a Communist label on the Democratic Party, and tie it with a tag of "treason"—and be abetted for a time by Attorney General Brownell and the Republican Party is a reflection of a new political temper in America.

The tendency to convert politics into "moral" issues is reinforced by a second fact, the activities of the McCarthyite intellectuals—James Burnham, William Schlamm, Max Eastman, and their minor epigoni. The rise of intellectual apologists for a reactionary right is, too, a new phase in American life. The quixotic fact is that many of these men, ex-Communists, repudiated at first not the utopian vision of Communism, but its methods. In the thirties, the crucial intellectual fight was to emphasize, against the
liberal piddlers who sought to excuse the harshness of Stalinism by reference to the historic backwardness of Russia, or the grandeur of the Soviet dream, that in social action there is an inextricable relation between "ends and means," and that consistently amoral means could only warp and hideously distort an end. Yet these men have forgotten this basic point in their defense of McCarthy. Schlamm, the author of a fine book about Stalinism, Die Diktatur der Luge (The Dictatorship of the Lie) applauds McCarthy as a man who is seriously interested in ideas. John T. Flynn, the old muckraker, denies McCarthy has ever made use of the lie. Max Eastman, slightly critical at times, worries most not about McCarthy but that the liberals by attacking McCarthy might be playing "the Communist game"; as if all politics were only two-sided, in this case McCarthy or the Communists.

How explain this reversal? Motivations are difficult to plumb. Some of these men, as George Orwell once pointed out in a devastating analysis of James Burnham,20 slavishly worship power images. The Freeman, the old-maidish house organ of the intellectual right, coyly applauded McCarthy as a tough hombre.

Yet one significant fact emerges from this bile: the hatred of the ex-Communist is not so much of the Communist, but of the "liberals," and the root of the problem goes back to the political situation of the Thirties. In recent years there has been a growing myth that in the 1930s the Communist dominated the cultural life of America, its publishing houses, Broadway, Hollywood, and the colleges. The myth is a seductive one which grows more plausible with the revelation of different "name" personages who the public now discover were once open or covert fellow-travelers. Yet, as Granville Hicks points out, only one anti-Communist book is ever cited as having been suppressed in those years, while anti-Communist authors such as Eugene Lyons, Max Eastman, Freda
Utley, Jan Valtin all published anti-Soviet books. The Communists, in fact, felt that the shoe at times was on the other foot. "In the autumn of 1934," says Hicks, "I wrote an article for the New Masses in which I argued that the New York Times book review assigned almost all books on Russia to anti-Communists." The Nation book section under Margaret Marshall in those years was anti-Communist. The Communist cells in universities were small; at Harvard in 1938, at the height of the popular front, there were fourteen faculty Communists in all. While the Communists were able to enlist a sizable number of well-known names for their fronts, the Committee for Cultural Freedom, in issuing a statement in 1939 bracketing the Soviet and Nazi states as equally immoral, displayed a more distinguished roster of intellectuals than any statement issued by a Communist front.

How explain these contrasting images of the Red Decade—the anti-Communists who regarded the Communists as dominating the cultural life and the Communists who complained that they had little influence? The evidence, I would say, lies on Hicks' side. The Communists did not dominate the cultural field, though they wielded an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. What is true, and here I feel Hicks missed the subtle edge of the problem, is that the official institutions of the cultural community—because of the Spanish Civil War, the shock of Fascism, and the aura of New Deal reform—did look at the Communist with some sympathy; they regarded him as ultimately, philosophically wrong, but still as a respectable member of the community. But the vocal anti-Communists (many of them Trotskyites at the time), with their quarrelsome ways, their esoteric knowledge of Bolshevik history (most of the intellectuals were completely ignorant of the names of the Bolsheviks in the dock at the Moscow trials, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Rakovsky) seemed ex-
treme and bizarre—and were regarded with suspicion. The anti-Stalinists, by raising "extraneous" issues of a "sectarian" nature, were "sabotaging" the fight against Fascism. Hence, in the thirties, one found the Communist possessing a place in the intellectual world, while the anti-Communists were isolated and thwarted.

Here, in a sense, is the source of the present-day resentment against "the liberals." If one looks for formal or ideological definition "the liberal" is difficult to pin down. To a McCarthyite, "the liberals" dominate the intellectual and publishing community—and define the canons of respectability and acceptance. And once again the knot of ex-Communists, now, as in the thirties, finds itself outside the pale. At stake is an attitude toward the Communists. The Freeman intellectuals want the Communists shriven or driven out of all areas of public or community life. The "liberal" says the effort is not worth the price, since there are few Communists, and the drive against them only encourages reactionaries to exact a conformity of opinion. By refusing to sanction these measures, the liberals find themselves under attack as "soft."

In these strange times, new polar terms have been introduced into political discourse, but surely none so strange as the division into "hard" and "soft." Certainly in attitudes towards the rights of Communists, there are many gradations of opinion among genuine anti-Communists, as the debates in the Committee for Cultural Freedom have demonstrated. But for the Freeman intellectuals, there are only two attributes—hard or soft. Even the New York Post, whose editor, James A. Wechsler has fought Communists for years, and the Americans for Democratic Action, whose initiating spirit was Reinhold Niebuhr, and whose co-chairman, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was one of the early intellectual antagonists of the Communists, before McCarthy ever spoke up on the subject, have been denounced as "soft."
What does the term mean? Presumably one is "soft" if one insists that the danger from domestic Communists is small. But the "hard" anti-Communists insist that no distinction can be made between international and domestic Communism. This may be true regarding intent and methods, but is it equally so regarding their power; is the strength of domestic Communists as great as that of international Communism? It is said, that many liberals refused to recognize that Communists constituted a security problem or that planned infiltration existed. This is rather a blanket charge, but even if largely true, the "hard" anti-Communists refuse to recognize the dimension of time. The question is: what is the degree of the present-day Communist infiltration? Pressed at this point some "hard" anti-Communists admit that the number of actual Communists may be small, but that the real problem arises because the liberals, especially in the large Eastern universities, are predominantly "anti-anti Communists." But what is the content of this "anti-anti Communism?" That it won't admit that the Communists constitute a present danger. And so we are back where we started.

The polarization of images reflects itself in a strange set, too, of contrasting conceptions about power position. The liberals, particularly in the universities, have felt themselves subject to attack by powerful groups; the pro-McCarthy intellectuals see themselves as a persecuted group, discriminated against in the major opinion forming centers in the land. A personal incident is relevant here. A few years ago I encountered Robert Morris, the counsel then for the Jenner Committee on internal subversion. He complained of the "terrible press" his committee was receiving. What press, he was asked; after all, the great Hearst and Scripps-Howard and Gannett chains, as well as an overwhelming number of newspaper dailies, had enthusiastically supported and reported the work of the Committee. I wasn't thinking of them, he replied. I was
thinking of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

The paradoxical fact is that on traditional economic issues, these "liberal" papers are conservative. All three supported Eisenhower. Yet, traditional conservative issues no longer count in dividing "liberals" from "anti-Communists." The only issue is whether one is "hard" or "soft." And so, an amorphous, ideological issue, rather than an interest-group issue, has become a major dividing line in the political community.

The "ideologizing" of politics gains reinforcement from a third, somewhat independent tendency in American life, the emergence of what may be called the "symbolic groups." These are the inchoate, often ill-coordinated entities, known generally, in capital letters, as "Labor," "Business," the "Farmers," *et al.* The assumption is made that these entities have a coherent philosophy and a defined purpose and represent actual forces. But is this true in a society so multi-fractioned and interest-divided?

The utilitarians, the first to give politics a calculus, and thus begin an experimental social science, made a distinction between a social decision (the common purpose) and the sum total of individual self-interest decisions. Adam Smith assumed a natural harmony, if not identity, between the two. But Jeremy Bentham knew that such identity was artificial, although he felt that they could be reconciled by an intelligent legislator through "a well-regulated application of punishments." The distinction between the self-interest and social decisions might be reworked in modern idiom as one between "market" and "ideological" decisions. The first represents a series of choices based on the rational self-interest of the individual or organization, with the aim of maximizing profit or the survival or enhancement of the organization. The second represents decisions, based on some purpose clothed in moral terms, in which the goal is deemed so
important as to override when necessary the individual self-interest.\textsuperscript{25}

In modern society, the clash between ideological and market decisions is often as intense within groups, as between groups. The "labor movement," for example, has strongly favored lower tariffs and broader international trade; yet the seamen's union has urged that U.S. government aid be shipped in American, not foreign bottoms, while the textile unions have fought for quotas on foreign imports. Politically minded unionists, like Mike Quill in New York, have had to choose between a wage increase for their members against a rise in transit fares for the public at large. Interest rivalries are often more direct. The teamsters' unions have lobbied against the railroad unions and the coal miners against the oil workers. In every broad group these interest conflicts have taken place, within industry, farm, and every other functional group in the society.

The tendency to convert interest groups into "symbolic groups" derives from varied sources. Much of it comes from "vulgar" Marxist thinking, with its image of a self-conscious, coordinated Business class (as in Jack London's image of "the oligarchs" in his \textit{The Iron Heel}, and the stereotypes of "Wall Street"). Some of this was taken over by the New Dealers with their image of "America's Sixty Families." But the biggest impetus has come from the changing nature of political decision-making and the mode of opinion formation in modern society. The fact that decision-making has been centralized into the narrow cockpit of Washington, rather than the impersonal market, leads groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, the Farm Bureau, the A.F. of L., \textit{et al}, to speak for "Business," for the "Farmers," for "Labor." At the same time, with the increased sensitivity to "public opinion," heightened by the introduction of the mass polling technique, the "citizen" (not the specific-interest
individual) is asked what "Business" or "Labor" or the "Farmer" should do. In effect, these groups are often forced to assume an identity and greater coherence beyond their normal intra-mural interest conflicts. A result again is that political debate moves from specific interest clashes, in which issues can be identified and possibly compromised, to ideologically-tinged conflicts which polarize the groups and divide the society.

The essays in this book are primarily analytical. Yet they also point implicitly to a dangerous situation. The tendency to convert issues into ideologies, to invest them with moral color and high emotional charge, invites conflicts which can only damage a society. "A nation, divided irreconcilably on 'principle,' each party believing itself pure white and the other pitch black, cannot govern itself," wrote a younger Walter Lippmann.

The saving glory of the United States is that politics has always been a pragmatic give-and-take rather than a series of wars-to-the-death. One ultimately comes to admire the "practical politics" of a Theodore Roosevelt and his scorn for the intransigents, like Godkin and Villard, who, refusing to yield to expediency, could never put through their reforms. Politics, as Edmund Wilson has described T.R.'s attitude, "is a matter of adapting oneself to all sorts of people and situations, a game in which one may score but only by accepting the rules and recognizing one's opponents, rather than a moral crusade in which one's stainless standard must mow the enemy down." 26

Democratic politics is bargaining and consensus because the historic contribution of liberalism was to separate law from morality. The thought that the two should be separate often comes as a shock. Yet, in the older Catholic societies, ruled by the doctrine of "two swords," the state was the secular arm of the Church, and enforced in civil life the moral decrees of the Church. This was
possible, in political theory, if not in practice, because the society was homogeneous and everyone accepted the same religious values. But the religious wars that followed the Reformation proved that a plural society could only survive if it respected the principles of toleration. No group, be it Catholic or Protestant, could use the state to impose its moral conceptions on all the people. As the party of the *Politiques* put it, the "civil society must not perish for conscience's sake."27

These theoretical foundations of modern liberal society were completed by Kant, who, separating legality and morality, defined the former as the "rules of the game" so to speak; law dealt with procedural, not substantive issues. The latter were private matters of conscience with which the state could not interfere.

This distinction has been at the root of the American democracy. For Madison, factions (or interests) were inevitable and the function of the republic was to protect the causes of faction, i.e., liberty and "the diversity in the faculties of men." As an interpreter of Madison writes, "free men, 'diverse' man, fallible, heterogeneous, heterodox, opinionated, quarrelsome man was the raw material of faction."28 Since faction was inevitable, one could only deal with its effects, and not smother its causes. One curbed these effects by a federal form of government, by separation of powers, *et al.* But for Madison two answers were central: first, an *extensive republic*, since a larger geographical area, and therefore a larger number of interests, would "lessness the insecurity of private rights," and second, the guarantee of representative government.

Representative government, as John Stuart Mill has so cogently pointed out, means representation of all interests, "since the interest of the excluded is always in danger of being overlooked." And being overlooked, as Calhoun pointed out, constitutes a threat to civil order. But representative government is important for the deeper reason
that by including all representative interests one can keep up "the antagonism of influences which is the only real security for continued progress." It is the only way of providing the "concurrent majorities" which, as Calhoun knew so well, were the solid basis for providing a check on the tyrannical "popular" majority. Only through representative government can one achieve consensus and conciliation.

This is not to say that the Communist "interest" is a legitimate one, or that the Communist issue is irrelevant. As a conspiracy, rather than as a legitimate dissenting group, the Communist movement is a threat to any democratic society. And, within the definition of "clear and present danger," a democratic society may have to act against that conspiracy. But these are questions to be handled by law. The tendency to use the Communist issue as a political club against other parties or groups (i.e. to provide an ideological guilt by association), or the tendency to convert questions of law into issues of morality (and thus shift the source of sanctions from courts and legitimate authority to private individuals), imposes a great strain on democratic society.

In almost 170 years since its founding American democracy has been rent only once by civil war. We have learned since then, not without strain, to include the "excluded interests," the populist farmers and the organized workers. These economic interest groups take a legitimate place in the society and the ideological conflicts that once threatened to disrupt the society, particularly in the New Deal period, have been mitigated. The new divisions created by the status anxieties of new middle class groups pose a new threat. The rancor of McCarthyism was one of its ugly excesses. Yet, the United States, so huge and complex that no single political boss or any single political grouping has ever been able to dominate it, may in time diminish these divisions. This
is an open society, and these status anxieties are part of the price we pay for that openness.

1 For an elaboration of the role of political contexts affecting attitudes, see the remarks following by Glazer and Lipset, on page 141; also, S. M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (University of California Press), pp. 224 passim.


3 See Dixon Ryan Fox, The Decline of the Aristocracy in the Politics of New York.


5 Cited in “American Individualism: Fact and Fiction,” by A. T. Mason. American Political Science Review, March, 1952. Professor Mason’s paper is the most concise account I know of the struggle between private economic power and popular political control in the United States.

6 A. T. Mason, ibid., page 5.


10 For an extended discussion of the role of interest groups in American politics, see David Truman, The Governmental Process (New York, 1951).


12 The amorphousness of power in contemporary United States and its relationship to the break-up of “family capitalism,” in the United States is developed by the writer in a paper on “The Ambiguities of the Mass Society and the Complexities of American Life,” presented at a conference in Milan, Italy, in September, 1955 on “The Future of Freedom.” This paper will be included in the proceedings of the conference, to be published in 1956 by Beacon Press.

13 By 1952 they controlled unions with fewer than five percent of United States labor membership as against a peak control of unions with 20 percent of union membership in 1944.

14 The contradictory stand of the Truman administration compounded these confusions and increased the alarm. On the one hand, leading members of the administration, including Truman himself, sought to minimize the degree of past Communist infiltration, on the other hand, the administration let loose a buckshot security program which itself inflamed the problems. This included the turning of the Attorney-General’s list of subversive organizations into a blank check-list to deny individuals passports and even non-government jobs; an unfair loyalty program in which individuals could not even face their accusers; and the prosecution of the Communist Party leaders under the Smith Act.

15 Before the Civil War and immigration, discrimination in America
was almost solely on religious grounds. In the decades that followed, the rising social classes began to create status demarcations. For an excellent account of the turning-point in social discrimination in America, i.e., its emergence in an egalitarian society, see the essay by Oscar Handlin, "The Acquisition of Political and Social Rights by the Jews in the United States," in the American Jewish Yearbook, 1955.

In the expansion and prosperity of the 1870's and 1880's, Professor Handlin points out, "many a man having earned a fortune, even a modest one, thereafter found himself laboring under the burden of complex anxieties. He knew that success was by its nature evanescent. Fortunes were made only to be lost; what was earned in one generation would disappear in the next. Such a man, therefore, wished not only to retain that which he had gained; he was also eager for the social recognition that would permit him to enjoy his possessions; and he sought to extend these on in time through his family. . . . The last decades of the nineteenth century therefore witnessed a succession of attempts to set up areas of exclusiveness that would mark off the favored groups and protect them against excessive contact with outsiders. In imitation of the English model, there was an effort to create a 'high society' with its own protocol and conventions, with suitable residences in suitable districts, with distinctive clubs and media of entertainment, all of which would mark off and preserve the wealth of the fortunate families."

For an account of a parallel development in England, see the essay by Miriam Beard in the volume by Graeber and Britt, Jews in a Gentile World. For the sources of discrimination in American traditions and populism, see Daniel Bell, "The Grassroots of Jew Hatred in America," The Jewish Frontier, June 1944.

16 Svend Ranulf, Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology, Copenhagen, 1938.
18 H. Richard Niebuhr, Social Sources of Denominationalism, New York, 1929, page 141.
19 See W. W. Sweet, Revivalism in America, New York, 1944.
20 Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays, New York, 1950.
21 Granville Hicks, Where We Came Out, New York, 1954.
22 I have attempted to assemble some of that evidence in my essay on the history of American Marxist parties in the volume Socialism and American Life, edited by Egbert and Persons, Princeton, 1952.
23 The sense of being a hunted, isolated minority is reflected quite vividly in an editorial note in The Freeman—June, 1955: "Since the advent of the New Deal (An Americanized version of Fabian socialism) the mass circulation media in this country have virtually closed their columns to opposition articles. For this they can hardly be blamed; their business is to sell paper at so much a pound and advertising space at so much a line. They must give the masses what they believe the masses want, if they are to maintain their mass circulation business; and there is no doubt that the promises of socialism reiterated by the propaganda machine of the government, have made it popular and dulled the public mind to the verities of freedom."
24 Jeremy Bentham, Principles of Morals and Legislation, Oxford edi-