CHAPTER NINE

PROTEST POLITICS AND THE PLURALIST VISION

I

A theory may distort our understanding of historical phenomena for two reasons. Perhaps a perfectly sound theory has been misapplied in the particular instances. Alternatively, the failure of those who use the theory may reveal weaknesses in the theoretical structure itself. Pluralism has failed to explain McCarthyism, agrarian radicalism, and the relation between them. We will first review the evidence that refutes pluralist interpretations of these movements. We will then examine the defects in the general theory of pluralism that have contributed to its specific failures here.

Pluralist interpretations of McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism suffer from four misconceptions. First, the pluralists see a continuity in support that does not exist and misunderstand the evolution of American politics. Second, they exaggerate the "mass" character of McCarthyism and misinterpret the "mass" character of the agrarian radical movements. Third, they minimize the importance of the specific issues with which McCarthy and the agrarian radicals sought to deal. And fourth, they fail to understand the role of moralism in the American political tradition.

The difference in electoral support between McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism is easiest to demonstrate objectively.

Both McCarthy and the agrarian radical movements did receive their strongest electoral support in rural states. Within those states, however, the groups upon which they drew were very different. Populism based itself on Scandinavian, wheat-growing, middle-class farmers. Progressivism in North Dakota and Wisconsin drew support from the poor, Scandinavian areas. Germans and Catholics tended to oppose these movements. But Germans were the chief ethnic group in McCarthy's electoral base, while significant numbers of Democratic Catholics were won over by his appeals. Where an agrarian radical supported McCarthy, as in North Dakota, this was because of a German support unusual for peacetime agrarian radicalism.

The lack of continuity in social support means that much of McCarthy's constituency had opposed agrarian radicalism. If the agrarian radical movements had the same concerns as McCarthyism, why were McCarthy's supporters not disproportionately agrarian radical? That so much of McCarthy's support came from traditional conservative constituencies suggests that many of McCarthy's underlying concerns were those that had traditionally activated the opposition to agrarian radicalism.

At the same time, the electoral evidence gives little comfort to those who have seen direct continuity from Populism or progressivism to modern liberalism and anti-McCarthyism. Where agrarian radicalism had an economic base among the poor and where it maintained a cohesive following over the years, its supporters tended to become part of the modern Democratic constituency. This placed them in opposition to McCarthy. Bob La Follette, Jr.'s 1940 Senate vote was correlated —.7 with McCarthy's Senate vote twelve years later. But where agrarian radical movements rose and fell without continuity, they made little disproportionate contribution either to the modern Democratic vote or to the opposition to McCarthy.

Moreover, holding the party vote constant there was a tendency for rural areas disproportionately to support McCarthy. Many of these rural counties, in South Dakota and Wisconsin, had earlier been progressive. The amount of support for McCarthy contributed by these former progressive counties was small; but pluralists could argue that it symbolizes the core of common concerns uniting McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism.

There is little question that farmers no longer dominate the Left in American politics as they did in the days of Jefferson, Jackson, and the Populists. Agrarian radicalism virtually disappeared in the decade of the New Deal and World War II. Class politics replaced sectional politics, and workers replaced farmers as the mass bulwark of the Left.

As the number of farmers declined drastically, as agriculture became more of a business on stable foundations, and as World War II and the cold war ushered in an unprecedented agricultural prosperity, the base for agrarian radicalism declined. The farmers that remained had little enthusiasm for movements of economic protest. As the larger society became more bureaucratized, as the strange forces of big labor and big government arose in the urban world, as a cosmopolitan outlook encroached on rural values, the programs of agrarian radicalism seemed unable to solve the problems that continued to agitate rural society. Finally, the increased importance of foreign policy and the Communist menace brought to a head the rural concern with moral questions. The trans-Mississippi West became the center of ideological conservatism instead of agrarian radicalism.

But simply because a group plays a different role in one period of history than another is no reason to read back its later conservative politics into the earlier radical period. Marx, writing about French farmers, distinguished the role they played at the time of the first Napoleon with their role at the time of the second, fifty years later.[1] One can make an

analogous interpretation of the role of America's rural inhabitants. Not to make such distinctions is to ignore the importance of history.

The pluralists justify their ahistorical view of rural politics because they detect a moralistic thread running through its progressive and conservative phase. Populism, progressivism, and McCarthyism were all in the pluralist view mass moralistic protests against industrialization.

The first difficulty with this view arises when the "mass" character of the movements is examined. A close look at the "mass" nature of McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism suggests the gulf that separates these phenomena rather than the bonds that unite them. The difference between McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism at the grass roots is striking. McCarthy mobilized little specific organizational support outside the grass roots Republican Party organizations. He encountered little opposition from local elites. He gave little evidence of exerting a mass appeal that uprooted voters from their traditional loyalties. Agrarian radical movements, on the other hand, held hundreds of meetings, organized at the grass roots for innumerable electoral campaigns, and created new voting patterns that often influenced events after the movements themselves had disappeared. Although these mass movements had a salutary effect on American politics, they exhibited many of the effects of mass activity that the pluralists fear. McCarthyism exhibited few of these effects. It neither split apart existing coalitions nor created an organized, active mass following. If Populism was a mass movement in the sense of its grass roots appeal and McCarthyism was not, McCarthyism had "mass" characteristics, such as contempt for the rule of law and generalized hostility to cosmopolitan values, that were lacking in agrarian radicalism. But such anomic characteristics were found more among political leaders and local elites than among masses. Since McCarthyism cannot be explained by the "mass" preoccupations of the masses, one must examine the support for

McCarthy among certain elite groups and the tolerance or fear of him among others. The pluralists' preoccupation with mass movements as threats to a stable, democratic group life prevents them from analyzing McCarthyism in this fashion.

When the relevant political issues are closely examined, the anti-industrial character of McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism — and therefore the alleged connection between them — also evaporates.

Like the agrarian protest movements, McCarthy drew sustenance from concrete political issues; but his issues were not the agrarian radical issues. Populism, La Follette progressivism, and the Non-Partisan League attacked industrial capitalists, not industrialization. They proposed concrete and practical economic reforms. McCarthy focused on the political not the economic order. While many McCarthy activists were in rebellion against modern industrial society, this society included — and was in their eyes dominated by — New Deal reforms of the type agrarian radicals had favored. This was a very different society from that of the "trusts" and the "robber barons" at the turn of the twentieth century, against which agrarian radicals directed their fire. Moreover, most of McCarthy's supporters on public opinion polls cared more about communism, Korea, and the cold war than they did about modern industrial society. McCarthyism could not have flourished in the absence of these foreign policy concerns.

If no direct links are sustained by the evidence, the pluralists may still retreat to the general argument that McCarthy utilized a peculiarly moralistic, agrarian radical, political style. They point to an alleged agrarian radical tendency to seek moral solutions to practical problems. As Hofstadter explains, "We are forever restlessly pitting ourselves against [the evils of life], demanding changes, improvements, remedies, but not often with sufficient sense of the limits that the human condition will in the end insistently impose upon

us."[2] The pluralists argue that as the agrarian radical world of moral certainty disappeared, this progressive optimism became frustrated. Former agrarian radicals sought scapegoats to explain their defeats. It was an easy step, for example, from the progressive belief that only special interests stood in the way of reforms to the McCarthy certainty that only treason could explain the failures of American foreign policy.[3]

Consider, as evidence for this interpretation, the career of Tom Watson. Watson, the leading southern Populist of the 1890's, supported the political organization and economic demands of the southern Negro farmer. He made a reasoned analysis of the causes of rural misery and opposed economic panaceas. But out of frustration generated by the defeat of Populism, Watson became an anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, southern demagogue.[4] For the pluralists, Watson's career symbolizes the development of McCarthyism. Hofstadter writes, "While its special association with agrarian reforms has now become attenuated, I believe that Populist thinking has survived in our own time, partly as an undercurrent of provincial resentments, popular and 'democratic' rebelliousness and suspiciousness, and nativism."[5]

But here the pluralists substitute the sin of noncomparative analysis for the sin of static analysis. Examination of the moralistic character of American politics discloses that (*a*) prior to the New Deal political moralism was by no means confined to agrarian radicals; (*b*) American political moralism asserts the reality of a public interest and denies the need for basic irreconcilable conflict, and thus much of the moralistic flavor of American politics is a condition of pragmatism rather than an alternative to it; (*c*) McCarthy's particular moralistic preoccupations were typical of traditional conservatism more than of left-wing progressivism.

The Populist tradition could produce antidemocratic and even neofascist figures, but given the nature of American society and the absence of strong elite backing for these figures,

they had little success in national politics. Tom Watson, who combined anti-Semitism with sympathy for the Soviet Union, was clearly a product of Populism gone sour; McCarthy was not.

McCarthy and the agrarian radicals came from two contrasting political traditions. Both traditions stressed self-help, but the Populists did not attack bureaucracies indiscriminately. Agrarian radicals sought to meet the threat of private bureaucracies by increasing the role of the state. The agrarian radical tradition was anti-Wall Street, anti-vested interests, anti-industrial capitalist. This tradition has been dying out as the role of left-wing protest politics has passed to the cities. Its evolution has produced Tom Watsons and Burton Wheelers, but sophisticated, humanitarian liberals like Quentin Burdick and George McGovern have been equally prominent. Perhaps their independence from Johnson on the Vietnamese war owes something to the agrarian radical heritage. McCarthy's ideological conservative tradition was anti-intellectual, antistatist, antibureaucratic, and antiforeign.[6] Locally prestigious and wealthy elites have dominated this politics, generally attracting widespread popular support as well. McCarthy, the son of a poor farmer, was marginally outside this conservative tradition. He effectively exploited this marginality, but without the support of the conservative tradition he would have made little impact.

Behind the pluralist misinterpretation of McCarthyism and fear of agrarian radicalism lies a legitimate suspicion of mass movements. But this fear, fed by the triumph of totalitarianism in Russia, Italy, and Germany, obscures the differences among mass movements. To find radical roots for McCarthy's support is to underestimate the middle-class diversity of the American populace. For the pluralists, McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism were united by their *petit bourgeois* character. But in America the *petit bourgeois* class is both enormous and diverse. Different political movements can call on support from different segments of that class; their support

can be *petit bourgeois* without being significantly related. It is a mistake to identify mass movements with authoritarianism and pressure groups with democracy. Rather there are authoritarian and democratic mass movements, just as there are authoritarian and democratic pressure groups. The Populist mass movement operated within the established constitutional framework of the republic; it was not a threat to democracy.

The danger of McCarthyism, on the other hand, while real, was not the danger of a mass movement. McCarthy had powerful group and elite support. He did not mobilize the masses at the polls or break through existing group cleavages. McCarthy's power was sustained only in part by the vague discontents of frustrated groups. Communism and the Korean War played crucial roles. The real danger posed by McCarthy should not distort our understanding of agrarian radical movements in America, nor should the pluralist criticisms of mass movements blind us to the real nature of McCarthyism.

II

"Pluralism" has become a term of praise in the academic political vocabulary, just as "democracy" and "freedom" are in the language of the population at large. "Pluralism" tells social scientists to look for a multiplicity of causes and not be satisfied with monistic explanations. It points to the importance of competing groups and diverse values in sustaining a stable democracy. It suggests the virtues of compromise and pragmatic activity. Complexity becomes a virtue both in scientific investigation and in democratic life. Now compromise, civilized values, competing groups, and an outlook that appreciates complexity are certainly praiseworthy in the abstract. The question we must ask, however, is whether these orientations, when brought to bear on particular historical events, aid or hinder our understanding of them.

Pluralism is both a method of investigation and a description of reality. As to methodology, perhaps the easiest criticism to make of a theory that stresses complexity is that it does not take us very far. We can all agree that historical events have more than one cause and that societies are affected by more than a single group or orientation. (Who would similarly deny that a monolithic political structure is inferior to one that encourages diversity?) But to say that a phenomenon has more than one cause is hardly to make an analysis. Unless pluralist theory can tell us which causes are the most important ones, its stress on complexity becomes a substitute for explanation, not an explanation itself.

Pluralist analysis of McCarthyism and agrarian radicalism, however, does not stop by asserting that the phenomena were complex. The most striking difficulty with pluralist methodology lies in the opposite direction. Having told us to look for complexity, the pluralists rely too heavily on a single factor. Pluralism focuses on a perceived conflict over industrialization and favors pro-industrial (instrumental) groups and attitudes over anti-industrial ones.

The consequence of this limitation of focus is that pluralism misses the actual complexity of American history. It makes the Populists into reactionaries because they opposed big business and had rural support. Dichotomizing rural and urban orientations, it misses the agrarian support for Al Smith. It collapses two isolationist traditions into one, and overlooks the contrasts between German and non-German support for agrarian radicalism. Each of these specific historical oversimplifications flows from inattention to the variety of groups, values, and forces that have contributed to American political conflict. In each case, a framework stressing general attitudes toward industrialization distorts the actual, concrete, specific conflicts over the nature of industrial society.

But pluralism is supposed to emphasize the variety of

groups, values, and forces that influence American politics. Have the pluralists here simply failed to follow their own methodological injunction to look for complexity? Have they simply ignored their own substantive hypotheses? The trouble, I would argue, lies deeper. The very "pluralism" they perceive leads directly to their oversimplified view of American society and social change.

Pluralism perceives a multitude of groups — farmers, businessmen, workers, political party activists, and more of the same. It thus apparently stresses the vertical divisions within society. The pluralist society seems at first blush exceedingly complex, but this would be a hasty conclusion. Consider the society pictured by the classical economists and the classical liberal political theorists. That society also contained tremendous movement and competition. Yet the classical liberals had in fact homogenized society in the sense of ignoring important distinctions among social phenomena. They had homogenized society first in fragmenting it into discrete, individual particles, second in assuming that each of these particles had more or less equal power, and third in postulating a basically similar outlook (rational maximization) among the particles.[7] That the classical liberal assumptions did in fact homogenize society is by now familiar doctrine. Yet each of these three homogenizing assumptions has its analogue in the modern pluralist vision.

First, although the group is a larger unit than the individual, it is still smaller than the class. A Marxist would argue that to substitute groups for individuals in analyzing society is still to miss the larger and more important social divisions. A society viewed in terms of innumerable competing groups, he would say, is still unduly fragmented. Without making a simple "class" interpretation of American political conflict, we shall see that this criticism of the group approach has validity.

Second, the pluralist vision makes no distinction in kind among the power of different groups in an industrial society.

Some groups have more power than others, in the pluralist view, but no groups are without power or the ability to acquire it if their members so desire. If the market solved the problem of power in classical liberal society, the countervailing power of groups serves the same function in modern industrial society.[8]

Third, the pluralist view makes no basic distinctions among the kinds of groups that exist in the pluralist society. Group theorists like Bentley and Truman are often charged with missing the role played by social consensus. But the real difficulty with pluralist analysis is precisely the opposite. Social consensus plays an overwhelming role in the pluralist vision. For the pluralists, group tactics and goals may vary, but since all groups accept pragmatic, democratic values and seek only piecemeal change, there is no essential difference among them.

Each of these three pluralist tenets is in some sense "true." Groups are more important actors in everyday American politics than classes, American political power is dispersed, and American political actors do share important similarities in values, tactics, and goals. But these three pluralist principles lead to three kinds of oversimplification. Pluralists oversimplify the character of mass movements, the relations between leaders and followers, and the role of political issues.

Consider first the pluralist view of mass movements. Complexity is reserved for the treatment of pluralist society; mass phenomena that fall outside that society are all lumped together as anomic, irrational, and anti-industrial. Group conflict and the satisfaction of concrete, group grievances, seen as a normal part of pluralist politics, are excluded from the analysis of mass movements: Populism, its specific targets minimized, becomes broadly anti-industrial. Political institutions mediating between individual attitudes and political behavior, stressed in pluralist politics, are ignored in analyzing "mass" behavior: party and congress have little impact

on McCarthyism. The role of elites in structuring and creating ideologies, vital to pluralist politics, does not enter the treatment of "mass" ideologies: McCarthy's rhetoric reflects the preoccupations of masses rather than of elites or of McCarthy himself.

Each of the three pluralist homogenizing tenets outlined above distorts the pluralist treatment of mass movements. First, all groups which do not accept a narrowly instrumental orientation and fail to rely mainly on pressure group tactics become "mass" phenomena. Such an outlook cannot perceive the essential differences between McCarthyism and Populism, for example. Not all mass movements are anomic, irrational, and anti-industrial; and not all phenomena that reject instrumental orientations are mass movements.*

Having denied the importance of a problem of power, pluralists do not treat mass movements as rational forms of organization by constituencies that lack power. Just because power is dispersed does not mean that all strata have a significant share of it. Extraordinary direct-action techniques like marches and demonstrations may be the only way in which deprived constituencies can exert influence; normal pressure group tactics may not be effective for them. Indeed, these extraordinary techniques may be particularly necessary to force action on a lethargic, decentralized ("pluralist") political system. But since the pluralists stress that power is shared in a pluralist democracy, movements that do not accept the normal political techniques of that society must be

* The concept of mass politics includes movements that mobilize masses of people, movements that cut across previous alliances, movements that exhibit millennial preoccupations, political actors who do not accept the rules of the game, and groups that utilize direct-action techniques, legal as well as illegal. There have been movements, like fascism, that combined these characteristics, but preoccupation with the dangers of fascism does not illuminate our understanding of American politics, where fascist movements have never flourished. Yet it is out of this preoccupation that "mass" phenomena are all seen as endangering pluralist stability and therefore all treated in similar terms.

dangerous and irrational. Their activities can only be ascribed to "the bathos of agrarian rhetoric" or to a basic hostility to modern industrial society.

Finally, the pluralists assimilate class politics to narrow interest group demands, reserving the concept of mass politics for broader political activity.[9] Such terminology denies legitimacy to what was in an older view the meaning of class action — namely, broad activity transcending narrow group lines. So-called mass phenomena in American history have been in this older sense class phenomena — uniting or attempting to unite groups of people along common, broad, economic lines. The Populists attempted to unite farmers in the 1890's; the earlier Knights of Labor and the later sit-down strikes partly succeeded in uniting workers. A "class" view of American politics gives meaning to these movements and to the obstacles they faced without needing to fit them into the pejorative straightjacket of mass theory.

The pluralist view of the complexities of group politics is only one side of the coin; the other side is a monolithic treatment of mass movements. It would be a mistake to conclude, moreover, that group politics itself is treated with sufficient complexity. That is certainly the intention, but the results are far different. I have suggested that the pluralists make three "homogenizing" assumptions about pluralist society. Consider the consequences of these assumptions for pluralist analysis regarding first the relations between leaders and followers and second the role of political issues.

The pluralists' stress on the vertical divisions in society — among groups and political actors in general — is meant to be an alternative to Marxist theory, which carried over the horizontal stratification of socioeconomic classes into the political arena. It also contrasts to Marxism in multiplying the number of important political actors. This in itself may be praiseworthy, but it has a further, unfortunate, consequence. As the number of groups increases, the divisions between them become less and less obvious. Society in effect

becomes a blur; it is homogenized. In this blur one division does stand out — that between leaders and everyone else. Having stressed the similarities in outlook and power among political actors, pluralism underplays the vertical divisions at the expense of this single horizontal division.[10] Its significance, in pluralist eyes, lies in the special role played by the leadership stratum in maintaining democratic stability.

This reliance on leadership may not seem to be required by pluralist thinking. Is not pluralism simply a matter of group conflict; do not the threats of membership withdrawal and of the formation of new groups keep leaders on their toes and preserve democracy? I have suggested earlier[11] how the pluralist reliance on groups and on civilized values leads to a reliance on leaders. In pluralist eyes, groups and group leaders control their members rather than vice versa. Group leaders are the force for moderation and compromise. Political leaders, whether formal group leaders or not, have a greater commitment to democratic values and a greater knowledge of political issues than does the population at large; survey evidence demonstrates this.

The pluralists therefore conclude that these political activists play the game of democratic politics and preserve the democratic rules. The less educated and less sophisticated the members of a stratum, the more important it is for that stratum to have formal group leaders. Workers, farmers, and Negroes, for example, play the democratic game best through the leaders of their organizations. Educated people do not require such organizational restraints; it is indeed fortunate, as the pluralists see it, that the educated are the main political activists.

From an appreciation of the virtues of the leadership stratum, it seems but a short and straightforward step to the conclusion that the rapid entrance of new masses into politics — which is what mass movements are all about — can only be destructive of a stable democracy. Thus populistic faith in the common man and his political wisdom, leading to efforts

to involve him in politics, seems directly to conflict with pluralism. As the pluralists see it, the political actors in a stable democracy are elites not masses, and it is deference to these elites rather than faith in the people that permits effective and democratic government. Behind pluralist analysis is the hope that if only responsible elites could be left alone, if only political issues could be kept from the people, the elites would make wise decisions.[12]

But for earlier writers on American politics, such as de Tocqueville, populism and pluralism were symbiotic. Nineteenth-century America, preindustrial and "populist" as it was, was overrun with groups. De Tocqueville argued that the American's belief that he could successfully take things into his own hands and successfully influence political elites led him incessantly to form and join organizations. As part of his populistic pluralism, de Tocqueville observed and favored widespread democratic participation within groups. Eliminate the populism, in this view, and the pluralism goes too.

The modern pluralists, however, are less concerned with forming new organizations than with preserving old ones. They are less interested in creating new group leaders than in creating respect for established ones. Their elite pluralism contrasts to de Tocqueville's grass-roots pluralism. Can it successfully emancipate itself from the populist heritage of American pluralism?

There are two difficulties in this effort, one involving the nature of deferential and "populist" attitudes in America, the other the character of political leaders. A syndrome of "populistic" attitudes among the masses may be dangerous in the abstract. But there is evidence that such a syndrome does not exist in America. The same people who support the Populist economic approach are not the ones who adhere to the authoritarian values allegedly found in Populism. In addition, those who express faith in the common man do not exhibit excessive hostility to all constituted authority. On the contrary, that hostility tends to be found in the same people

who also have the deferential attitudes the pluralists applaud. The authoritarian pattern is one of hostility and submission, not hostility alone.

One recent national survey included a "populism" scale, derived from the literature of and about the Populist movement. The scale contained a series of economic items — such as antagonism toward monopoly, hostility to Wall Street, support for a worker-farmer alliance — and a series of noneconomic items — anti-intellectualism, antiexpertise, anti-eastern power, the view that decisions are made in secret, adherence to Bible Belt puritanism. Those scoring high on economic populism tended to have prolabor attitudes. High scores on noneconomic populism were associated with pro-business attitudes.[13] These data suggest (1) that the economic program of Populism is not associated in the public mind with a syndrome of "populist" authoritarianism, (2) that a generalized suspicion of economic and noneconomic authorities (which is alleged to give McCarthy Populist roots) does not exist at the mass level, (3) that what the pluralists see as populist-authoritarianism is found with conservative rather than with left-wing attitudes.

This so-called populist authoritarianism does not appear to be associated with faith in the people. It may very well be that generalized deference and generalized "populism" are not alternatives but rather that the same people who are excessively suspicious of some authorities are excessively deferential to others. Consider those who express deferential attitudes toward authority. They reveal the least faith in the common man and tend to be the most authoritarian, least-educated, most rigid, most hostile, and most ethnocentric members of the society. They also tend to be, like the pluralists, most worried about stability and fearful of change.[14] If a naïve faith in the people and in progress is required to sustain tolerance and elite autonomy, this may be a paradox with which it would be dangerous to tamper.

But is the aim of protecting elite autonomy itself praise-

worthy? Clearly leaders are better educated, better informed, and more politically skillful than the mass of Americans; clearly they are more verbally committed to preserving democratic rights. But they also have other characteristics. At least since World War II, leaders of the Republican Party have been far more conservative than their own party supporters — who are on many issues closer to Democratic leaders than to Republican ones.[15] Here, then, is a pressure to the Right in American politics from a powerful elite group. Deference to these leaders would increase conservatism in particular, not democratic stability in general.

And more than economic conservatism is at work here. The activists who supported McCarthy were drawn from Republican Party workers. Those whom Goldwater emboldened, if they were not Republican activists already, came from the well-educated and wealthy segments of the population. In a country that produces such political elites, increasing elite autonomy is not an entirely salutary prescription.

There are also problems with increasing the autonomy even of more moderate and democratic leaders. Leaders as a whole develop organizational interests that make them unwilling to take risks. They tend to overestimate opposition and to confine themselves to the realization of goals as noncontroversial as possible. They develop friendly relations with other leaders and fear to endanger their own prestige, the stability of their organizations, or the achievements that have been won.[16] Powerful organized groups may fragment government so that each group seeks hegemony within its sphere of special concern. Under such conditions, public policy emerges from the decisions of narrow groups, each relatively unchecked within its own sphere. Social change becomes extremely difficult, as even the impetus provided by narrow group conflict is minimized.

Moreover, the ideology of organized groups, which usually favors cooperation and opposes force, is deceptive. Consider

the moderate and democratic language of Samuel Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labor. Gompers insisted that "no lasting gain can ever come from compulsion" and urged "sincere democratic deliberation until a unanimous decision is reached."[17] But the function of this language, for Gompers as for other group leaders, contrasts with the spirit. To argue that discussion can resolve all differences, in an apparent spirit of tolerance and democracy, implies that no legitimate conflict of interest or opinion exists. Those who seek to organize and exert pressure in opposition to those with power then become illegitimate. Often their efforts are met with the coercion frowned upon and disguised by the ideology.[18] The rhetoric of reasonableness, whether employed by group leaders, national politicians, or liberal intellectuals, can too easily be turned against thoroughgoing political opposition. Conflict-inhibiting anxiety about the propriety of their ends and the fragility of their institutions often makes leaders more suspicious of democracy than they will admit in the abstract.

For all these reasons, the case for relying upon leadership autonomy is not convincing. Leaders may have "good" attitudes on civil rights, for example, but the way to get those attitudes transformed into action is not simply to make the leaders more autonomous. In a pluralist society, leaders will always be under pressure, and the solution (for civil rights goals) is not independent leaders but leaders dependent on the "proper" sources of support. This has been the function performed by the civil rights demonstrations in recent years. In the absence of this mass activity, the "enlightened" leaders have acted slowly or not at all.

One function of mass movements, then, is to overcome the political conservatism of sections of the leadership stratum and the organizational conservatism of that stratum in general. Even the existing leaders most directly concerned may develop organizational interests that insulate them from responding to constituency pressure. The Populist Party of

the 1890's organized independently of the existing parties, and the sit-down strikes and the organization of the CIO in the 1930's took place mainly outside the established trade union bureaucracy. And the civil rights movement of the 1960's began outside such established Negro organizations as the ghetto political machine and the NAACP. Each of these mass movements thrusts masses from below — first farmers, then workers, now Negroes — into political life. Each was necessitated in part by the resistance to change among better-educated, better-informed leadership elements in the society. How is it, given pluralist analysis, that these movements have not been authoritarian threats to a pluralist democracy?

Pluralist theory has presented us with a society in which (1) the positions of groups on issues, given a social consensus, are not decisive for democratic stability, and (2) the general differences between leaders and followers are more important for stability than the issue differences that divide leaders among themselves and unite a leader with his group of followers. There is truth in both these propositions, but their effect as a tool of analysis is to minimize the importance of political issues in political controversy. The focus of pluralism has been on groups in the abstract, "populism" in the abstract, deference in the abstract, and popular and elite attitudes in the abstract. Pluralist theory has paid insufficient attention to the differential effects of mobilizing masses on the basis of different political issues. It is these political issues — economic and political reform in the Populist case, communism for McCarthy — that decisively influence the way in which masses will be mobilized, if at all, and the directions that mass activity will take.

Let us assume, with the pluralists, a high incidence of antidemocratic attitudes among the relatively apathetic mass of people. This does not mean that when people are mobilized from among this mass, antidemocratic attitudes will be relevant. Mass activity is goal directed; and the nature of the goals is decisive in determining who will be mobilized, how

they will be mobilized, and what their relation to other groups in political life will be.

Mass movements, in the first place, activate only a tiny minority of the previously uninvolved citizens. The March on Washington for civil rights in August 1963, largest demonstration of its kind in American history, mobilized no more than 2 percent of the adult Negro population. Once it is realized that only a small minority of the populace becomes involved in mass activity at any one time, it becomes important to know who those people will be. The picture of a homogeneous mass of potentially mobilizable citizens (united, for example, by hostility to industrial society) has little connection with reality. Different issues will draw upon different mass constituencies. The new political activists will vary in their commitment to democratic values, depending on whom the issue has made active. The issue of the Communist menace will involve different people and create different activists than the issue of the "trusts"; the issue of discrimination will involve still a third set of activists.

Second, the political issues determine which segment of an individual's total bundle of attitudes will become relevant. White workers may be prejudiced against Negroes in the abstract and if mobilized on the issue of neighborhood housing may take anti-Negro positions. But if they are mobilized on the basis of common economic grievances, as happened in the organization of the CIO in the 1930's, the activity of white workers may be pro-Negro. Even the white farmers of the south when mobilized on an economic basis by southern Populism engaged in pro-Negro activity.

There is no reason to assume that the antidemocratic attitudes of masses mobilized by depression or discrimination will affect their actual political activity. Indeed, their activity may change their attitudes. Members of elite groups, with "better" attitudes in the abstract, may engage in antidemocratic activity out of fear of the mass movements. Behavior cannot be predicted from attitudes alone. Our concern should

be not with analyzing the people or popular attitudes as a whole but with locating the relevant attitudes of the relevant people.

Third, the pluralists portray American politics in terms of conflict among discrete, narrowly focused, nonideological political actors. This picture underestimates the extent to which ideological commitments and the requirements of political alliance amalgamate discrete interests and discrete groups. Positions on political issues decisively influence who will ally with whom. In the real political world alternatives are structured; some issues are tied to others.

The mass of Americans do not have developed political ideologies,[19] but the consequences of their actions may be influenced by leadership ideologies. Workers, because of their economic interests, support union and political party leaders committed to civil liberties and civil rights. That this consequence may not be intended does not make it less important or more "accidental." Similarly, in order to support McCarthy, workers would have had to vote Republican. McCarthyism was thus tied to a party and an economic outlook repugnant to most workers. Feeling for the Wisconsin Senator would have had to be fairly intense before workers would actively support him. On the other hand, for Republican leaders, a better informed and more tolerant group than workers, support for McCarthy was tied to their interest in maintaining party harmony, to their anti-New Deal attitudes, and to their foreign policy concerns. This tying together of issues influences the direction that political activity can take; it helps explain why McCarthyism did not become a mass, lower-class movement and why northern Democrats from white constituencies supported Negro political demands for many years more than did northern Republicans as a whole.

Because it minimizes the significance of issue content, then, pluralism fails to explain how (1) certain issues can activate masses without antidemocratic consequences while (2) other issues, more antidemocratic in character, can receive elite

support and not significantly agitate the populace at all. Pluralism, instead, must praise all elites and interpret all political phenomena it fears in "mass" terms. The consequence is far from a scientific theory of politics.

Pluralist thinkers have focused attention on a wide range of important subjects. Pluralism has attacked several traditional left-wing shibboleths. It has exploded myths about popular virtue and revealed the dangers in thoughtlessly democratic thinking. It has pointed out the risks to constitutionalism inherent in millennial preoccupations. Pluralism has stressed the value of groups, of diversity, and of the rule of law. It has directed attention to the role of political leadership. It has sought to go beneath the apparent aims of political movements and to discuss general social developments.

Pluralist thinking has not produced scientific propositions so much as useful insight. And for this it deserves credit. At the same time, because of its underlying preoccupations, the pluralist vision is a distorted one. The fear of radicalism and the concern for stability, however legitimate as values, have interfered with accurate perception. Thanks to its allegiance to modern America, pluralism analyzes efforts by masses to improve their condition as threats to stability. It turns all threats to stability into threats to constitutional democracy. This is a profoundly conservative endeavor. Torn between its half-expressed fears and its desire to face reality, pluralist theory is a peculiar mixture of analysis and prescription, insight and illusion, special pleading and dispassionate inquiry. Perhaps pluralism may best be judged not as the product of science but as a liberal American venture into conservative political theory.

APPENDIX A

CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

A correlation coefficient measures the relation between two variables. The correlation coefficients in this study measured either the relation between elections or between votes in elections and background variables such as Catholicism. The basic unit of measurement was the percentage vote in a county for a given candidate. For example, if the relation between support for Roosevelt in 1936 and Stevenson in 1952 was being analyzed, each county would be assigned two scores — the percentage of votes cast for the Democratic presidential nominee in the two elections. The highest correlation coefficient possible is 1.00, which would be obtained if there was a parallel rate of increase in the percentages given the candidates in the two elections. For example, if the vote in County A was 45 percent for Roosevelt and 40 percent for Stevenson, in County B 50 percent and 45 percent, respectively, in County C 55 percent and 50 percent, County D 60 percent and 55 percent, and this pattern of one-to-one increase persisted in all the counties in the state, then a 1.00 correlation would be obtained. If, however, for County E the Roosevelt vote was 61 percent and the Stevenson vote was 85 percent, the parallel rate of increase would be disturbed. Even though for each county the higher the support for Roosevelt, the higher the support for Stevenson, the magnitude of the correlation coefficient would be below 1.00.