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OUT OF THE FRYING PAN, INTO THE FIRE

A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF GEORGE WALLACE

The American political scene is in the midst of great upheaval and confusion. Many Americans have lost faith in the traditional two-party system. Some have given up on electoral politics altogether, but many of these dissatisfied citizens would support George Wallace as a third party presidential candidate.

In a three-way race for president, the Harris survey of May 12, 1975 gave 23% of the vote to a Reagan-Wallace ticket, against Ford-Rockefeller and Kennedy-Glenn tickets. In Harris' own words, "such a three-way race could reverse modern political trends and leave the political party system in a shaky position. The survey goes on to point out that a "Reagan-Wallace ticket draws as much from Senator Kennedy's potential votes as it does from those of President Ford."

George Wallace has been growing in the cracks of national electoral politics for more than a decade. He has already run in the Democratic presidential primary races of 1964, 1968 and 1972. In 1968 he ran for president as the American Independent Party candidate, getting nine million votes and winning five southern states. Had the '72 Wallace campaign not been cut short by an assassination attempt, it would probably have had even greater impact than the '68 campaign.

What is the basis for Wallace's growing popularity? What are his economic and political programs? How would they affect the country and the world? To answer these questions, we must first look at the general state of the nation.

The United States is in the beginning stages of an economic crisis which shows every

sign of getting worse. Rents and prices are still on the rise after skyrocketing for several years. In recent months, coupled with only a slowdown of inflation, has come skyrocketing unemployment, now over 9% nationally according to official figures (which exclude many who are jobless).

WALLACE'S POPULAR APPEAL

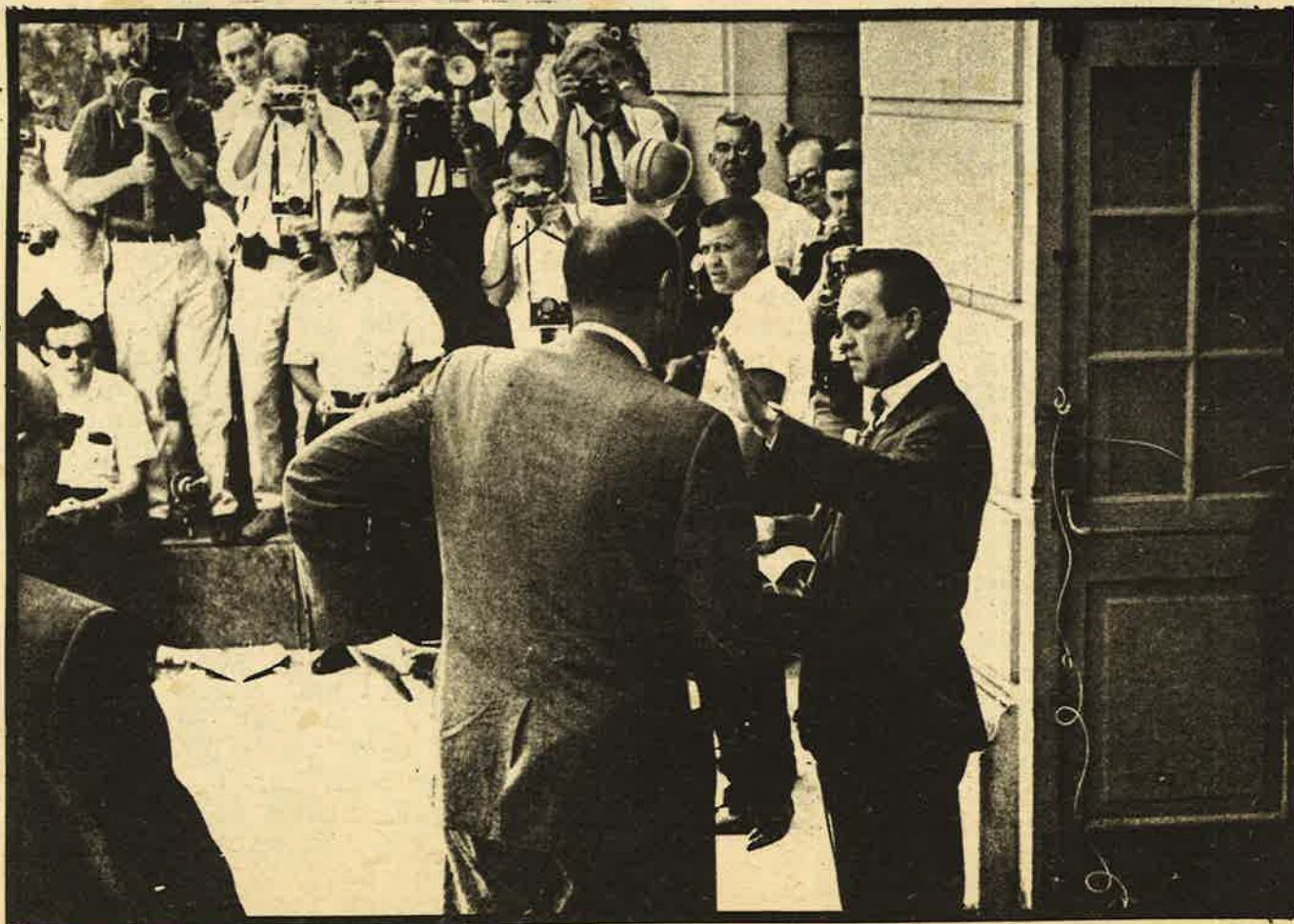
The American Dream of continually increasing prosperity is now failing to materialize for the small businessmen and the many white working people who believed in it. More and more, "just breaking even" becomes an impossible goal.

And with the declining economy has come a deterioration of public schools, declining public services and a growing crime rate (especially theft and theft-related crimes).

"We have worked hard all our lives," many people are saying, "but now we are losing everything we worked for. Why? Who is to blame?"

"People on one end are looked after and people on the other end are looked after, but those in the middle are looking after everybody," Wallace answers. He speaks of "the great mass of middle-class America" that is being robbed by the very poor and the very rich. And he por-

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Schoolhouse door, 1963: His podium and microphone in place, Wallace confronts Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach at entrance of the University of Alabama. Wallace's appearance of defiance was belied by quiet arrangements he made to back down.

Wallace--cont.

trays himself as the representative of this middle class--the average citizen, the farmer, the working man, the little businessman--in its battle against Ivory Tower pointed heads, Federal bureaucrats, loafers and welfare cheats.

IS WALLACE AGAINST BIG BUSINESS?

The Republican party has, since the Great Depression been considered a pro big-business party. In recent years, the Democrats have shown themselves to be hardly better than the Republicans. A major part of Wallace's appeal is his anti big-business image. Is there any reason to believe that Wallace, whose campaign received \$250,000 from the late billionaire, H. L. Hunt, is really opposed to big business?

In fact, there is every reason to believe the opposite. In an April 29, 1972 interview with Business Week magazine, Wallace laid out his economic program in some detail.

Wallace says he is opposed to the growing Federal bureaucracy, yet he is opposed to any cuts in defense spending. The Department of Defense consumes over 60% of the Federal budget and is far and away the largest Federal bureau.

Wallace says he is for tax reform, yet he opposes a capital gains tax (a tax on profits).

Wallace says that perhaps the 23% oil depletion allowance should maybe be lowered a little, at a time when many politicians are calling for it to be abolished.

Wallace says he is against foreign aid, supposedly to keep money in the country. Yet he favors foreign investment. Only the tiniest part of money leaving the country is foreign aid. Mostly it is foreign investment and military spending.

Wallace says he supports Federal works programs to ease unemployment yet he is quick to stress that "the private sector can make better use of the money and create more jobs with it than the government can." In other words, it is better to subsidize big business than to create Federal job programs.

Wallace says he is opposed to special tax breaks for the rich, yet he wants to keep the tax-free exemption for state and municipal bonds. These bonds are issued in very large denominations, and are held mostly by large banks, brokerage houses, and wealthy private investors. Interest on and repayment of these bonds often comes off the top of tax revenues, making these bonds virtually

risk-free as well as tax free.

Further, Wallace says he is opposed to deficit spending, yet he supports the issuance of state and municipal bonds to raise public funds. But a bond is nothing but an I.O.U. from the government. Issuing bonds is precisely the way a government borrows money and goes into debt.

In short, Wallace says he is for the average citizen and against the "establishment", but his own positions show him to be just as pro big-business as Nixon, Ford, Humphrey or Jackson -- only a bigger liar.

What about the other side of Wallace's program--opposition to the welfare cheats and loafers. If Wallace lies about being against big business, he not only is telling the truth about his opposition to the poor, but understating his position.

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Nixon and Wallace: A Nixon-Wallace meeting in Alabama in May, 1971, prompted speculation that Nixon had dropped a federal tax investigation of George and Gerald Wallace in return for a promise by Wallace not to run in 1972 on a third-party ticket.

There is a set of ideas current among many white working and middle class people that, taken as a whole, blame black people for the current breakdown in American society. This trend of thought depicts black people as lazy and immoral, as people who would rather have a dozen kids and live off welfare than work for an honest living. It pictures blacks as the chief perpetrators of violent crime, the carriers of drug addiction and the main cause of decaying schools and neighborhoods.

George Wallace does not publicly espouse this set of ideas, though many of his supporters do. To be openly racist is not quite acceptable for a presidential hopeful...

yet. But consider the following exchange between N.Y. Times columnist James Reston and Wallace:

Let me ask you this. The President has said that we are going to have abnormal unemployment for at least three years in this country. Now, that carries us through the Bicentennial; it carries us through the election. At the same time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics put out the statistics that today 41.1 per cent of teen-age blacks in this country are out of work. Now, I don't know about you -- that's a scary statistic to me, and I guess my question is whether you think we can go through this period for three more years with this kind of unemployment without violence in the streets?

No, I don't think so, and I don't like to talk about it because I don't want to encourage it at all, but I think this country, the Government, will have to do something for the hard-core unemployed--maybe as employer of last resort. But this matter has to be handled in the sense that the hard-core people must have

some hope and some way of being employed if they will work. Now, to that person -- no matter what his background -- that doesn't want to work, then the country is going to have to be tough on him. If he has the availability of a job, whether he be white or black, and won't accept it, and then if he commits a crime, we ought to be able to handle him in the proper manner to get him off of society.

Wallace's answer assumes that many of these black youth do not want to work. While not so straight-forward it is clearly based on the view of society outlined above.

"So what is wrong with this outlook?" some may ask. "Who

Wallace--cont.

cares if it is racist? It's the truth."

In the first place this picture is false. Most people who believe these ideas are ignorant of the fact that, on a national level, seven out of ten welfare recipients are white. And current government figures show approximately 80% of black adults work for a living (even with today's generally high unemployment). Crime and other social problems that are ascribed to Blacks are actually more or less directly related to poverty (an economic condition that includes more and more whites every day).

This brings us to the second and more important reason to oppose these views -- the self-interest of working people as a whole.

Many Wallace supporters believe that cuts in welfare benefits and social services are aimed only or mainly at the Blacks. They believe in giving more leeway to the police to handle criminals who are mainly black.

As the economic crisis assumes larger proportions, large numbers of working people are going to be out of work for long periods and in need of welfare. Many more workers will be forced to strike against speed-up, unsafe working conditions, or for unionization. Inevitably the large majority of these workers will be white.

The Wallace supporter who votes today to cut welfare benefits, is voting to cut his own welfare benefits tomorrow. He votes today to let the police handle criminals "in the proper manner." Tomorrow the police will thank him as they break up his picket-line and his head, "in the proper manner." He votes for Wallace in order to help himself, but actually he is voting to help big-business.

There is another purpose of the big monopolists that is served here. Every bit of anger that white working and middle-class people direct against the Blacks is that much less anger directed against the monopolists, the real criminals behind the economic crisis. And the more that Blacks and Whites argue with each other, the better big business likes it. It is the old game of divide and rule, a game which Wallace has made a whole political career out of playing.

WALLACE'S RECORD IN ALABAMA

Let us note, in passing, the results of these divide and rule politics in Alabama, where Wallace (or his wife) has been governor for ten of the last twelve years.

Sales tax was only the beginning. Official racism (5 out of 1,556 gubernatorial

appointees have been black) has covered up many other anti popular measures. The sales tax hits working people the hardest. But property taxes, which hit the rich the hardest are extremely low in Alabama, and assessed property values for some big corporations are so low that a Federal court has ordered a sweeping review of assessments.

During Wallace's term of office the state debt has nearly doubled. At the same time there have been only slight increases in workmen's compensation and unemployment insurance payments. Alabama still has a right-to-work law -- which prohibits the union shop -- and it remains one of nine states with no minimum wage law of its own.

All of these measures have been to the detriment of the majority of the people of Alabama. When Governor Wallace took office in 1963, Alabama was 48th among the 50 states in per-pupil expenditures for public education, 47th in the percent of draftees passing the armed forces mental test, 45th in per-capita income, 47th in percent of residents living above the poverty line, 45th in infant survivability, and 48th in doctors per 100,000 people.

The latest statistics, for the early 1970's, show Alabama 50th in per-pupil expenditures, down two notches; 48th in percent passing the armed forces test, down a place; 49th in per-capita income, down four; 48th in degree of poverty, down one; 48th in infant survivability, down three places; and 48th in the number of doctors per 100,000, no change.

WHAT IS WALLACE LEADING UP TO?

George Wallace's accomplishments in Alabama serve only as an introduction to what we could expect from a Wallace presidency. Of course his policies would be pro big-business, anti working-class and extremely racist. But the United States under Wallace would not simply be a repetition of Alabama.

Many people see Wallace as a new kind of political figure, and are thus unsure of the kind of president he would make. But Wallace is far from an original.

In the not so distant past, a certain country had a minor-party candidate for national office. Like Wallace, this candidate's popularity grew as public disenchantment with the major political parties grew. Like Wallace, his popularity really flowered with the onset of an economic crisis. Like Wallace, this candidate posed as an anti-establishment candidate. Like Wallace, he claimed to represent the middle class against the monopolies and against the poor.

Also like Wallace, this candidate blamed his country's problems on a minority group that was supposedly robbing the country blind. And like Wallace, law and order and anti-communism were cornerstones of his program.

Wallace himself pretty much let the cat out of the bag when he declared that the United States fought on the wrong side in World War II. The country is Germany and the candidate was none other than Adolph Hitler.

There are differences, many people will say. Yes, there are, but let us examine them closely. Wallace blames Black people for the countries problems, Hitler used the Jewish people as scapegoats. The

Civil-rights movement is quite recent, so Wallace must keep his racism under the cloak of code words like 'welfare chisler' and 'crime'. Hitler was able to be openly anti-Semitic. The democratic traditions of the United States are of long standing, so Wallace must appear to be democratic, even as he would systematically destroy democracy. Germany had only a short experience with political democracy, thus Hitler easily dispensed with it. It is sufficient for Wallace to come off as anti-establishment; Germany had the second largest left-wing (other than Russia) in the world so Hitler had to call himself a Socialist.

The differences here are not fundamental, only tactical. They are no more than the reflection of the differences between Germany and the United States. Americans should remember that Germany was not the only country to become fascist. Italy, Japan, Finland, Hungary, Spain, part of France, Portugal, and today--the Phillipines, South Africa, Chile and the Soviet Union have all succumbed to fascist dictatorships. These countries are as different from one another as from the United States. There is nothing unique about the United States. It can happen here. □

Immigrants--cont.

menace to their jobs and livelihood. They were ostracized, discriminated against and even segregated into ghettos to a certain extent; teeming slums of the Lower East Side, Little Italy, Hell's Kitchen, etc.

The fact that many of these immigrants were able to improve their lot was chiefly due to two circumstances. The first was unionization and the struggles of labor. The second has to do with the fact that U.S. capital regained its footing through WWII and began to expand rapidly. This enabled, as always, a percentage of the newer wave of immigrants to move up and even out