

We All Do Better, Together.

Paul Wellstone died on October 25th, 2002, with his wife and daughter in a plane crash over Eveleth, Minnesota. It was hardly a year after the “declaration of war” on terror and hardly a month before the United States military solidified its occupation of Afghanistan, which is just barely over after 20 years. He died barely six months before congress voted for the war in Iraq that he was absolutely opposed to and voted against as one of his first moves as senator in 1991. As one out of 11 senators that voted against the use of force in both the Persian Gulf and in Iraq, he was often criticised for a lacklustre stance on national security — an issue that has consumed politics in the United States since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, which directly lead to some of the most draconian and backwards counter-terrorism laws the modern world has seen.

Wellstone once considered a run for President in 1998 but pulled out, telling reporters that: “I’m short, I’m Jewish, and I’m a liberal”, and how that just wouldn’t fit. At 5’5”, Wellstone was a short guy looking out for the little guy.

He was a staunch defender of civil liberties and a stalwart supporter of progressive policy that, after his death, would only see sporadic gains in national traction under politicians such as Bernie Sanders (Independent - VT), Elizabeth Warren (Democrat - Massachusetts), or Al Franken (D - Minnesota) before a more contemporary movement getting representatives such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D - New York), Ilhan Omar (D - Minnesota), Ayanna Pressley (D - Massachusetts), or Rashida Tlaib (D - Michigan) into federal congress.

Before Congress, Wellstone was a professor in Political Science at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, for 21 years. He began locally political organising in the 1970s and 80s, advocating for the poor, working-class, and other politically disenfranchised people in Rice County, the county he lived in. He was a strong advocate for public housing, universal

healthcare, unionisation, protection of the environment, and held strong anti-war sentiments. He created grassroots organisations like the Better Rice County organisation and helped organise the Hormel meatpacking workers strike in Austin, Minnesota — which turned into one of the longest strikes in Minnesota history.

Wellstone won the 1990 election after declaring that the Democratic Party “lost its soul”, promising to fight for left-liberal and progressive ideals on Capitol Hill. He barely squeaked out a victory against Republican incumbent Rudy Boschwitz after running a grassroots underdog campaign, being outspent 7-to-1 by his Republican opposition. Wellstone’s campaign focused on building a populist movement, where, for the first time in decades, voters felt like a politician was actually dedicated to making their lives better. This inspired young people, people in poverty, and people from minority communities to get involved with politics — many for the first time. Wellstone would often stir up fiery controversy on the Senate floor, often by adding last-minute agendas to bills. When he first entered office in 1991, at a White House reception for new senators, he directly confronted George Bush Sr. over wanting to go to war with Iraq. He chewed him out so badly that Bush apparently left the reception swearing.

Wellstone won his re-election in 1996 after touring Minnesota in an old green school bus with his wife Sheila, which became a signature symbol of Wellstone and his legacy. They made several appearances in towns and cities up and down the state, speaking with people from all over the state and actually making an effort to find out about them and what they needed. Wellstone was personable, fast-talking, committed to his ideals and liked to use light humour to get his points across. He inspired an increase in voter turnout, particularly from young and minority voters, in a state that was already well-known for having some of the highest voter turnouts in the country and won again against Rudy Boschwitz with a comfortable lead. ^[1]

¹ Our Campaigns, *1996 Minnesota Senate Race* (2021) <<https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=173>> [accessed 7 April 2021].

Before his death, Wellstone sponsored nearly 200 bills that were introduced into the senate, with only the contents of three sponsored bills ever making it into a different law during his 11 years as a senator. ^[2] They were mainly focused on improving mental health, stopping domestic violence, and preventing homelessness among Veterans. This doesn't seem like a lot, but few bills directly sponsored or authored by congresspeople ever make it into law. For example, in Bernie Sanders' 15 years in the senate, he has had only 3 of his sponsored bills directly become laws, and two of those were post office dedications. ^[3] Sanders arguably has quite a bit more political power than Wellstone did.

Wellstone was never meant to change the entire system though, and wouldn't have been able to. He did sponsor/co-sponsor and championed several things that made it into law, such as some key money-limiting amendments to the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. This led lobbying groups like the NRA and *Senatorial Ghoul* Mitch McConnell (R - Kentucky) to decry "**unconstitutional!!**" before it was upheld by the supreme court. ^[4]

Wellstone wasn't able to do most of what he promised, as what happens to most politicians like him, especially at the time. Wellstone was often alone in his fight to improve people's lives, but he acted mostly with his conscience. He didn't treat politics as a game, or a means to get rich — he treated it as an opportunity to help people. Because of that, Wellstone succeeded in restoring belief in the ideas of the collective, and that a system which is inherently altruistic benefits us as much as it benefits everyone else.

² GovTrack, *Sen. Paul Wellstone* (2021) <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/paul_wellstone/400566> [accessed 7 April 2021].

³ GovTrack, *Sen. Bernard "Bernie" Sanders* (2021) <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/bernard_sanders/400357> [accessed 7 April 2021].

⁴ Justia: US Supreme Court, *McConnell v. Federal Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003) (2021) <<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/540/93/>> [accessed 7 April 2021].

“Whatever happened to the idea — it’s a union idea — ***that we all do better when we all do better?***”^[5]

Wellstone coined this phrase in a speech to the Sheet Metal Workers Union in 1999. Wellstone speaks about the importance of unions, and the ongoing attacks that they are facing from the conservatives in the federal government. He relates a union to the ideals of a greater community, and speaks about how Republicans in government are pushing a hyper-individualist ideology that he dubs “new isolationism”: a “buddy, you’re on your own” kind of ideology that revolves around the bootstraps narrative and “*personal responsibility*” as a way to dismiss the poor, minority groups, people with addiction problems, anyone wanting decent healthcare, and just about everyone seeking any sort of help from the state. Lawmakers even named policy after this individualist rhetoric: the 1996 welfare reform bill was called the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act” (PRWORA).

Y’know, *#JustNeoliberalThings*.

So this speech is incredibly relevant at the time, PRWORA passed into law three years earlier and was already having rippling effects throughout the country. The law essentially slashed most major social safety nets, introduced harsh work requirements in order to receive any sort of government aid, and entirely replaced the pension system with 401(k)’s in the name of “reducing dependency” on welfare. “Personal Responsibility” laws like PRWORA had huge effects on economic inequality and security in the United States. These laws contributed to the drastic increase of job insecurity over the last two decades. Nowadays, young people switch careers an average of four times before they’re 32 — which in turn has had significant effects on the national sense of community, leaving millions

⁵ Paul Wellstone, *Sheet Metal Workers Speech (1999)* (14 October 2017) <<https://web.archive.org/web/20171014003719/https://www.wellstone.org/legacy/speeches/sheet-metal-workers-speech>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

isolated, and has greatly contributed to the sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and substance abuse which is ravaging health and life expectancy throughout the country.^[6]

Wellstone argues in this speech that people are most focused on trying to keep from falling through the cracks of society. This hyper-individualism written into American law forces working people to trample over each other in order to just survive, let alone get a leg up in the system — which is a huge barrier to things like unionisation, and thus, building strong communities. Wellstone is essentially arguing, whether he knew it or not, that hyper-individualism is unravelling and destabilising our society as we know it — alongside gutting programs and services that helped tens of millions of Americans.

What he's getting at with *we all do better when we all do better*, is that we're all interconnected, and the little actions and positive influences we make towards our community: local, regional, nationwide, or globally are all also beneficial to ourselves. Making services and spaces available to the public is a good thing for *everyone*. Healthcare available for free is good for *everyone*. Housing at affordable prices, or just for free is good for *everyone*. What Wellstone is getting at here, is that we need to stop being so damn selfish! And after nearly four decades of new right conservatism and neoliberalism, this was a breath of fresh air to most Minnesotan voters to see someone actually dedicated to fighting to make people's lives better for the sake of everybody. Wellstone stuck his foot in the door and tossed this idea into American electoral politics, and nearly 20 years after his death, this idea has continued to creep into the public consciousness.

Helping people escape poverty is beneficial to you in the long run, and that's what we should be gearing our economy towards: a collectively altruistic economy that wouldn't be geared to maximise profits and growth, but to maximise people getting the things they need, and, to an extent, what they want on top of that. An altruistic economy, or a gift economy, would be primarily focused on being an economy of caring, and there's a saying that follows:

⁶ Heather Long, '[The new normal: 4 job changes by the time you're 32](#)', *CNN*, 12 April 2016.

“in a gift economy, the more you give, the richer you are”. However, that isn’t compatible with the neoliberal capitalist system, or a capitalist system in general: bringing people out of poverty by giving them what they need makes it harder to exploit them for profit, and altruism is counterproductive for capitalist systems. It also commodifies everything and anything to the point where basic survival needs are a market where prices are skyrocketing. ^[7]

And while some American Conservatives or Libertarians would argue that the world is out there for you to exploit, you can’t just go out into the woods and live life like it’s Minecraft. You can’t just build a farm or mine for resources on land that isn’t yours, and all the land is already claimed — white settlers have already taken it all and forced us to deal with the consequences of their economic system in which the more you *take*, the richer you are.

Paul Wellstone was not a socialist, although I’m positive that he would be absolutely lambasted by Republicans as being one these days. Sure, he believed in some primarily socialist ideals such as unionisation, workers rights, and ending poverty — and that’s a good thing to have in the United States government. I believe that Wellstone genuinely sought to improve people’s lives, and I think that’s a good thing that’s inspired vast numbers of Americans to start working towards that.

Wellstone is part of a trend of social democratic congressmen like Hubert Humphry, Eugene McCarthy, and Walter Mondale, who all represented the state of Minnesota in Congress. The state has for decades, if not a century, largely been a Progressive, Social Democratic bastion promoting the image of *capitalism with a ‘human face’*.

I’m not going to go into much detail about the shortcomings or flaws of Social Democracy because I could rant about it for dozens of pages — that isn’t to say Social Democracy is entirely a bad thing though. It’s a step in the right direction, sure, but that

⁷ "Leaders", '[Housing Prices are going Ballistic](#)', *The Economist*, 10 April 2021.

shouldn't be the end goal: it is likely a brief stepping stone on the path to building a better world for everyone.

In short, social democracy goes against the principles of “we all do better when we all do better”, and transforms it into “we all do better here, while you suffer over there”. One of the massive issues social democracies don't often address is that they still rely on massive exploitation of foreign workers and resources, usually from the Global South. As even “friendly” capitalism still relies on systems of mass exploitation and the same ideas of infinite economic growth that threaten all life on the planet.

We can't *all* do better when only *some* do better if they're in the right countries.

Even though Wellstone wasn't a socialist, he represents the beginnings of a drive left in American politics. 50 years ago, running for office on, or advocating for a socialist platform would've, at best, gotten you in front of a judge, imprisoned, barred from a job, or in the case of black activists like Fred Hampton: assassinated by the government. Now, contemporary politicians are openly running as Democratic Socialists (which is different from Social Democracy), and a 2019 Gallup Poll found that 43% of Americans have positive opinions on socialism, despite incorrectly conflating the terms

“big government”: ^[8]

(buzzword essentially meaning *when the government does stuff*TM)

and **socialism**:

(direct and democratic worker or community control over the means of production).

Wellstone serves as a cornerstone of this drive left in American politics: his passion and genuine desire to help the people he was supposed to represent struck a chord with people across the country. A decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, neoliberal capitalist realism had sunk into the roots of American politics. “The end of history”, an argument devised by Francis Fukuyama which states that liberal capitalist democracy is the

⁸ Mohamed Younis, '[Four in 10 Americans Embrace Some Form of Socialism](#)', *Gallup Polls*, 20 May 2019.

final form of government, seemed to show us that a harsh unbridled capitalist status quo was the only thing that laid ahead for the future of humanity. Wellstone challenged this when he won office in 1996, and this showed the American public that there are more caring, more kind ways in which we can run our societies.

Generally speaking, Wellstone was consistent with his progressive beliefs and was very vocal on the senate floor about the things he supported, and the things he opposed. He voted on measures according to his strong beliefs, although that seemed to peter off the longer he was in Washington. Right before his death in 2002, he voted in favour of the Patriot Act: a set of laws that massively expanded the government's power to spy on its citizens, many of which powers were recently reauthorised in 2020.

Similar trends of Wellstone's voting record shows that he fell victim to the "go-along to get-along" party culture in Washington. Many obituaries reporting Wellstone's death reminisce about how the "firebrand senator eventually learned the ways of the Capitol", or how he "moderated his personality and outspoken views" over the years. This moneyed "scratch-my-back-and-I'll-scratch-yours" bipartisan culture has shrouded the Capitol in a veil of corruption and tangled American politics into a game of "persuading" politicians in order to get legislation passed. Because legislation needs a majority to get through both houses of congress, the two major political factions — which are split pretty evenly across the government — essentially force politicians to keep in line with their respective parties if they want to get anything done to appease their constituents, and what are essentially shareholders.

This holds more true for the Democratic Party, since they aren't *as outwardly and openly* funded by lobbying groups or "generous donors" as many of their Republican colleagues are. Senators like Paul Wellstone shake the culture of Congress, sure, but because congress, regardless of party, ultimately shares the interests of whoever is paying them over the American people, people like Wellstone aren't actually able to do much. Wellstone tried to treat his compromises as pragmatism, as "doing the work", but doing so just perpetuated how that political machine already operated. At the end of the day, senators

like Wellstone still need the votes of the majority of congress to get laws passed, which the majority is taking loads of money to write and pass certain laws. No matter how noble or beneficial this legislation to the American people is, if it doesn't align with the interests of the wealthy or corporate America, it's unlikely to be written into law no matter how many compromises are made, and no matter how pragmatic you are.

There's a reason why large American corporations are now suddenly finding it easy to distance themselves from the GOP after the January 6th Capitol Insurrection: the centrist establishment Democrats can do the same things Republicans, their supporters just won't attempt an armed insurrection. Although, I am shocked that JPMorgan, one of the Republican Party's largest donors, pulled their support after the events on January 6th. I guess now they suddenly they care about the optics of "maintaining democracy". Especially after 2013, where they suggested to governments in the European Union that they should erect authoritarian systems in order to maintain the power and wealth of their investment banking. ^[9,10]

There's a cycle that congresspeople like Wellstone go through. We're just seeing it again on rerun with current members of Congress like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D - New York), Cori Bush (D - Missouri), and Jamaal Bowman (D - New York): younger firebrand social democrat, progressive, or even self-described socialist congressional members stick to their morals and beliefs when they first arrive, giving passionate speeches and stirring up the status quo. ^[11] They are then branded as "too idealist", "irrelevant", or "unrealistic" by both Democrats and Republicans alike. ^[12] Either that, or they're demonised by knee-jerk reactionary media that seems to have a stranglehold on the minds of American voters over the age of 50. So in order to get anything done, these congresspeople constantly have to compromise their principles, water down their legislation, and join this *Great Game* of

⁹ Stefan Steinberg, '[JPMorgan calls for authoritarian regimes in Europe](#)', *World Socialist Web Site*, 17 June 2013.

¹⁰ David Mackie, Malcolm Barr, Marco Protopapa, Alex White, Greg Fuzesi, Raphael Brun-Aguerre, '[The Euro area adjustment: about halfway there](#)', *J.P. Morgan: Europe Economic Research*, (2013).

¹¹ '[Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez calls out Trump in five-minute corruption game](#)', (CNN, 2019).

¹² David Catanese, '[Coons: Democrats Need To Abandon 'Wild-Eyed' Race to Left](#)', *U.S. News*, 12 July 2018.

American politics. They become trapped within the system that they sought to reform, and then eventually are forced to compromise over and over again, perpetuating a system that keeps hurting the American public. ^[13]

Of the two main parties in the United States, neither party represents an estimated 3/5ths of the bottom of American society. ^[14] Poor, working, and even middle-class people are largely ignored by American politics. This is reflected in the historically low voter turnout that plagues the United States: despite record-breaking voter turnout in the 2020 election, it was still only about 66.5% of eligible voters in the country.

Politicians like the Clintons, Joe Biden, Amy Klobuchar (D - Minnesota), and Nancy Pelosi (D - California) are the so-called “New Democrats”, often just called *diet Republicans* because of their similar political beliefs to the GOP. These people dominate the Democratic Party and are able to spend a lot of money winning elections. However, they tend to lose their seats at twice the rate as their more “liberal”, or Social Democratic counterparts who are focused on forming alliances with disenfranchised populations throughout the United States and building a grassroots movement.^[9] According to this logic, Paul Wellstone would likely *still* be in office if he hadn’t died. Some of the only reasons that lukewarm *Republican-lite* Democrats keep winning elections is because they have party funding to run massive elections, and they seem to entirely rely on being the “lesser evil” option to Republicans.

What also doesn’t help is that the Republican Party has passed sweeping legislation to heavily gerrymander voting districts and block a free electorate. Only about a quarter of the American population considers themselves Republican, and that checks out with election statistics: there were under 74.2 million votes cast for Donald Trump in the 2020 election, and looking back all the way to 2004, the percentage of Americans that consider themselves Republican never ticks up past 40%.^[15] Republicans voters almost always vote, and do so

¹³ Gregory Krieg, ['Bernie Sanders distances himself from Ocasio-Cortez's comments, says Medicare for All is 'already a compromise'](#), CNN, 19 February 2020.

¹⁴ Noam Chomsky, ['Rollback'](#), Z Magazine, January 1995.

¹⁵ Gallup Polling, *Party Affiliation: Gallup Historical Trends* (2021) <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>> [accessed 12 April 2021].

more in the party line than Democrats do.^[16] Even then, Americans who consider themselves Democrats are only another third of the country. Because of the archaic voting legislation that Republicans have put into place, the Democrats can only squeak out a slim majority government — the kind where they need every legislator on board with everything in order to pass bills — when they achieve an overwhelming majority of votes across the country.

The Democratic Party is a big-tent party, and that's an understatement: it tries to represent ideologies ranging from the "New Democrat" conservative-lites, all the way to hardliner socialists — and everything in-between. The Democratic Party is so ideologically broad, that it is constantly fighting and contradicting itself. The Democrats have no coherent or set agenda for their party members or legislators. And while it is easy to see where the argument for ideological compromise comes from: Republicans refuse to budge on most policy that is put out by Democrats, no matter how conservative it actually is, and the Democrats are forced to compromise if they want to get things done — it is a horrible argument, and Wellstone often addresses this, saying in his 1999 speech:

Harry Truman said it best "You run two Republicans against one another and a Republican wins every time." The Democratic Party's got to be there on the bread and butter economic issues, am I right? Democratic party's got to be strong on the work majority issues, am I right? They've got to focus on the kitchen table issues, am I right? They got to speak to the concerns and circumstances of people's lives and make a difference and here's what it's all about. And it's not just unions and it's not just me as a strong labor senator. It's a political majority.

And the Democratic Party has been shooting itself in the foot for decades now by ignoring Progressives and even Socialists in their base and aiming their legislation at white, suburban voters who would normally vote Republican. This was the case with Wellstone, and currently is the case with the Progressive wing of the Democratic Party, and is increasingly frustrating and disenfranchising a sizable portion of their big tent. ^[17] The

¹⁶ Rasmussen Reports, *Republicans More Likely To Vote Party Line Than Democrats* (2021) <https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/august_2018/republicans_more_likely_to_vote_party_line_than_democrats> [accessed 12 April 2021].

¹⁷ Jon Queally, '[Democrats, Says Ocasio-Cortez, Have Compromised Away "Too Much of Who We're Supposed to Be"](#)', *Common Dreams*, 6 January 2019.

Democrats end up having a monopoly on political excuses when they can't get anything comprehensive done because they're stretched so broadly, and there are too many contradicting views to actually unify the party behind a single agenda. One of the only reasons they hold offices is because they've perfected their branding as "the lesser evil" in comparison to Republicans — and for the most part, it works. A majority of Biden voters — myself included — didn't vote for Joe Biden because they were excited about him as a politician, *they voted for him because he wasn't Donald Trump*.^[18] This back-and-forth swinging between centre-right establishment Democrats who don't want to change the status-quo, and various right-wing ghouls who would destroy the planet if it meant the GDP ticked up by another 2% is stalling out the country during a time where we need to be focusing on mobilising our economy and country against the threat of Climate Change.^[19] Many of these establishment politicians were in office when Wellstone was, and he was one of the few senators to have an "extremely protectionist" voting record, stating: "You know, to be silent about this agenda, which is so extreme, silence would be betrayal."^[20]

A staggering 60% of Americans are dissatisfied with Democracy in the country, and 41% of Americans don't consider themselves identifying with either major political party.^[21,22] In the 2020 election, both parties were scrambling to court the approximately 100 million, or 43% of registered voters who rarely or never have voted. The way they would vote is a mixed bag at best, but largely unknown. Demographically speaking, nonvoting people are young, less educated and generally more working-class than the electorate. They are more likely to be non-white, more likely to be women, and "lean democratic" overall.^[23] This group

¹⁸ Jack Brewster, '[Poll: 56% Of Biden Voters Say They're Voting For Him Because He's 'Not Trump'](#)', *Forbes*, 13 August 2020.

¹⁹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers* (2021) <<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>> [accessed 12 April 2021].

²⁰ Living on Earth, *Paul Wellstone: Unabashed Liberal* (2021) <<https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=96-P13-00039&segmentID=1>> [accessed 12 April 2021].

²¹ Pew Research Center, *Satisfaction with Democracy: Democratic Rights Popular Globally but Commitment to Them Not Always Strong* (2021) <<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/27/satisfaction-with-democracy/>> [accessed 12 April 2021].

²² Gallup Polling, *Party Affiliation: Gallup Historical Trends* (2021) <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>> [accessed 12 April 2021].

²³ Dhruvil Mehta, '[Increased Voter Turnout Could Benefit Republicans Or Democrats In 2020](#)', *FiveThirtyEight*, 21 February 2020.

of non-voters are the people whose economic conditions are uncertain and precarious. To me, this sounds like the group of disenfranchised people that Paul Wellstone was trying to represent in congress. Progressive ideals are incredibly popular with the majority of Americans: universal healthcare, election reform, minimum wage increase, expanding union membership, free college, getting money out of politics, among other issues are all popular by well over 50% of Americans. ^[24,25,26] Ducking back into Wellstone's 1999 speech, he states:

When I travel the country, much less travel Minnesota, I'll tell you this: I know what people are focused on. People are focused on: how can I get a decent living so that I can get my children the care that they need and deserve. People are focused on: how can I make sure my children get the best education. People are focused on: how can I make sure that we don't fall between the cracks.

Americans want economic security and are primarily focused on just managing to survive. Wellstone is talking about these 100 million people — people that the Democratic Party has, *and still is* largely ignoring, and people that the Republican party are actively working against.

On paper, it sounds like people want politicians and a party that believes that

we all do better when we all do better.

Generally speaking, it sounds like the majority of Americans want Social Democracy at the very least. Noam Chomsky argues this often in papers, books, and lectures. This is why the contemporary drive left in American politics is relevant and important to political discussions in the US. Paul Wellstone was among the first few contemporary politicians who got some momentum behind this drive. A majority of Americans don't believe that capitalism is working for them, but still have negative reactions when someone brings up socialism.

²⁴ Steve Liesman, '[Majority of Americans support progressive policies such as higher minimum wage, free college](#)', *CNBC*, 27 March 2019.

²⁵ Eric Levitz, '[POLLS: Here Are 7 'Left Wing' Ideas \(Almost\) All Americans Can Get Behind](#)', *New York Magazine*, 30 August 2019.

²⁶ Yascha Mounk, '[Democrats Should Just Stick to What's Popular](#)', *The Atlantic*, 12 August 2019.

Some people blame this on “crony capitalism”, but that’s what I call “*a feature, not a bug*” in the system. Most Americans still believe in people being able to own their own small business, and I agree — everyone should own and have democratic control over their workplace. The major political parties aren’t making it work though because both serve the interests of corporations, the elite, and the wealthy. The lack of a *proper* Left-Coalition party — one that actually includes Progressives, Social Democrats, Socialists, and Communists — in American politics leaves out any opposition for the Republicans, and the Establishment Democrats to dismantle civil liberties, welfare, political organisation, union representation, and economic prosperity for average Americans in the name of compromise, “personal responsibility”, “balancing the budget” (while pouring 753 *billion* dollars into the military ^[27]), and all the other lukewarm excuses we’ve heard for the last 50 years.

I think it’s time for the Democratic party to split. The Establishment Democrats don’t seem like they’re going to win over any of the 100 million disenfranchised non-voting Americans, because they don’t adequately address kitchen-table issues. Wellstone brings this up in his 1999 speech — meaning that the Democrats can’t shit, but they certainly haven’t gotten off the pot for over 20 years. This new Left-Coalition party should focus on mobilising non-voting people, who seem to be the prime people who would support a labour or socialist movement. This Coalition Party could help start building an even larger mass movement of Americans who are focused on how *we’ll all do better when we all do better*.

That all being said, we first need to focus on campaign and election reform if we want any sort of Left-Coalition Party to go anywhere. More people vote when they have more access to the vote, and reinstating democratic systems into the country is likely to restore people’s faith that these systems work. The polling data about dissatisfaction with democracy I quoted earlier? People’s satisfaction increases as systems become more democratic, and when people believe that their systems of governance care about their

²⁷ Rebecca Kheel, '[Biden requests \\$753B defense budget, a slight increase](#)', *The Hill*, 9 April 2021.

interests. The GOP is increasingly making it painstakingly clear that they don't want democracy, and that must be stopped.

And that's because capitalism is inherently anti-democratic. The GOP is a staunchly laissez-faire neoliberal capitalist party — with Establishment Democrats only being slightly less so. It only makes sense for the GOP to be anti-democratic.

However, that same sentiment could be extended to the Establishment Democrats, or even Progressives and Social Democrats: Capitalism goes directly against those principles of *we all do better when we all do better*. It incentivises people to be greedy and screw over other people in order to get a leg up, or even just *survive*. Sure, it generates lots of wealth, but at what cost? And for who? Wealth inequality is now one of the main driving factors behind poverty, and is actively driving it *up*. Human Rights Councils have estimated that if we wanted to eliminate poverty at the current rate, it would take nearly 200 years: only if the global economy grew by 173 times its current size, and we had *no recessions*.^[28] We've had two recessions in the last 15 years, it seems like we're about to enter a 3rd one, and the global economy has generally entered a period of stagnation — capitalism isn't going to solve these problems.^[29] This is also without mentioning that neoliberal capitalism might leave the planet without resources, and possibly even uninhabitable within as early as 2100 as a result of a manmade runaway greenhouse effect driving global climate change.^[30]

Which is why I say Social Democracy isn't, and shouldn't, be the end goal. Sure, we can regulate capitalism heavily — and I think we should start doing that now — but I believe it to be foolhardy to think that will entirely fix things. These problems with capitalism are inherent problems to the system itself, and will likely just replicate themselves later on down the line if we don't do away with it. And again, like I mentioned earlier, Social Democracies

²⁸ Human Rights Council, *Alston Poverty Report: The parlous state of poverty eradication* (2021) <<https://chrqj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Alston-Poverty-Report-FINAL.pdf>> [accessed 15 April 2021].

²⁹ Chris Giles, '[Global economy enters period of 'synchronised stagnation'](#)', *Financial Times*, 13 October 2019.

³⁰ David Wallace-Wells, '[The Uninhabitable Earth](#)', *New York Magazine*, 10 July 2017.

still rely on the heavy exploitation of labour and resources from the Global South. Shouldn't *we all do better when we all do better* apply to everyone?

While I'm sure Wellstone was only speaking about the United States in his speech, I believe that the inherently altruistic principals of "we all do better when we all do better" could and should take an internationalist approach. Shouldn't we care about the wellbeing of our neighbours, the people down the way, the people in the next town over, the people in the country you can't pronounce, the people who you will never meet. All of us, means *all* of us after all. We have a moral obligation to build a better future, a future that gives people — *all people* — the right to a dignified, comfortable life. We are well on our way to a post-scarcity world, and in some regards, we are already there: we already produce enough food to feed 10 billion people, renewable energy is quickly moving to become the cheapest and most abundant source of energy in the world, we have the means to house everyone, we're even well on our way to giving most of the planet a cellphone. ^[31]

Alongside all of that, labour is being increasingly automated and nearing post-scarcity as well. Capitalism is eating itself alive because of it: it maximises profits to have robots do your work, but then people are out of jobs and can't buy your products. Automation in a capitalist economy spells economic collapse, but it spells post-work society for a socialist or communist economy. Aaron Bastani, the author of *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*, said to The Guardian:

I'm not saying we're there yet, though in certain areas we clearly are. Take video and audio content – we've reached post-scarcity with that. A Spotify or an iTunes or a Wikipedia-style model doesn't feed people, obviously. But the claim could be that this is the leading edge of a set of trends for software, but also, soon, for hardware. Because that's attendant with the rise of solid freeform fabrication, 3D-printing, synthetic biology. ^[32]

³¹ Eric Holt-Giménez, Annie Shattuck, Miguel A. Altieri, Hans Herren, '[We Already Grow Enough Food for 10 Billion People and Still Can't End Hunger](#)', *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 36.6, (2012).

³² Brian Merchant, '[Fully automated luxury communism](#)', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2015.

Technology, while it shouldn't be a crutch, has the potential to help us achieve a world where it is possible, even easy, to achieve all of us doing better and receiving the things we need — hell, even *want*.

People might say I'm an idealist, and they're absolutely right. Should that dismiss what I am saying? Absolutely not. I ask you: is it so wrong to strive for utopia? Don't we have a moral obligation to make things as good as we can for everyone?

We are quickly approaching a crossroads in which we start along the pathway to an altruistic, comfortable, and sustainable near-utopia, or we continue the status quo and all go extinct. I know which road I'm choosing! We need to do away with the hyper-individualist ideals of New Isolationism, and nurture a sense of collectivity and solidarity with each other and the planet. Like Wellstone said:

we all do better when we all do better.

Because we're all in this together.

Republicans and Democrats aren't going to do much to help usher that in though. This idea goes against what both parties are working to protect: capital. The Democratic establishment's political position of "oh well, our hands are tied!", rolling over to a bunch of petro-dollar funded goons, and returning to the pre-Trump status quo only guarantees that the shitty situation we're in stays the same — or gets even worse for the American people. That's intentional.

One of Wellstone's famous quotes was: "Politics is not about power. Politics is not about money. Politics is not about winning for the sake of winning. Politics is about the improvement of people's lives."

The only way we're going to do this is by building a mass movement. The way we do this isn't just through electoral politics though. We should be starting mutual aid networks, using direct action to organise and mobilise our communities, building dual power structures, and building local direct democracy first. Then we can divorce ourselves from the Democratic party, creating a new Left-Coalition Party that focuses on creating a better life for

everyone on a directly democratically-decided consensus, and actively *and fiercely* opposes anyone who tries to take that away from or work against us.

Some socialists don't believe in participating in capitalist electoral politics at all, and I don't blame them: most of the time it actively works against what we strive to do. However, using it as a means to organise and oppose the degradation of the gains that *we do make* is something I think is worthwhile.

Wellstone also once said: "If we consign ourselves merely to the poetic, utopian discussion of what should be and neglect the prosaic, practical work of the electoral politics that is, we doom ourselves to the margins of political life." In simpler terms, it means that we need to put the work in, and there's a ton of work that needs to be done going forwards.

But I'm ready to get working.

Are you?

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