

Spring 5-4-2022

Against The Establishment: How The Campaigns of Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura were Antecedents to Donald Trump

William Kertzman
wkertzma@skidmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/hist_stu_schol



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kertzman, William, "Against The Establishment: How The Campaigns of Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura were Antecedents to Donald Trump" (2022). *History Honors Theses*. 11.
https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/hist_stu_schol/11

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Creative Matter. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Creative Matter. For more information, please contact dseiler@skidmore.edu.

**Against The Establishment: How The
Campaigns of Ross Perot and Jesse
Ventura were Antecedents
to Donald Trump**

Final Draft

By William Kertzman

04/18/2022

Introduction:

On October 11, 1992, three presidential candidates stood on stage at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and when asked by moderator Jim Lehrer what separated them from one another, Texas businessman Ross Perot responded, “the thing that separates my candidacy and makes it unique, is that this came from millions of people in fifty states all over this country, who wanted a candidate that worked and belonged to nobody but them.”¹ Six years later on October 20th, 1998, in St. Paul, Minnesota, former professional wrestler and mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, Jesse Ventura was asked by moderator Catherine Severin from the League of Women Voters about campaign finance reform. Ventura responded, “First of all you lead by example; Jesse Ventura accepts no PAC money whatsoever, Jesse Ventura is not owned by special interest groups. My two opponents can’t say that.”² Seventeen years later in September of 2015, on a crowded stage in Simi Valley, businessman and reality star Donald Trump loudly proclaimed, “I am not accepting any money from anybody; nobody has control of me other than the people of this country.”³

When trying to understand how American politics got to the place it is today in 2022, and more specifically why someone like Donald Trump became electable in 2016, many have pointed to the building of the conservative movement that began in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan, picked up steam with figures like Newt Gingrich in the 1990s, and eventually culminated (as they see it) with the election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016. From the liberal perspective, documentaries like Showtime’s *The Reagan’s* try to chart a straight line from Ronald Reagan to Donald Trump by drawing comparisons between the two such as, “Reagan and Trump were so manifestly unqualified to be president that their inner circles

¹ PBS Newshour, “Bush, Clinton, and Perot: The first 1992 presidential debate,” YouTube Video, 1:54, September 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWo88Lr0rzw&t=276s>.

² CSPAN, “Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate,” CSPAN Video, 7:30, October 20, 1998, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?113541-1/minnesota-gubernatorial-debate>

³ CBS News, “2015 Republican debate: Jeb Bush pushes against Donald Trump on political money,” YouTube video, 0:23, September 16, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-7V_qSkdSw.

considered unusual machinations to reassure the public,” and, “both were entertainers before they were politicians.”⁴ Whereas on the right, figures like former Vice President Mike Pence have tried to embrace the comparison between Reagan and Trump (for positive reasons of course), by saying things like, “before he was the great communicator, Ronald Reagan was the great disruptor; a conservative outsider who was vigorously opposed by a moderate establishment in his own party...Today I think we find ourselves in a very similar position; president Donald Trump is *also*, one of a kind. He too disrupted the status quo, he challenged the establishment, he invigorated our movement, and he set a bold new course for America.”⁵

The Reagan/Trump comparison appears at first glance to be appropriate by either left-wing or right-wing criteria, and when one looks at how Trump has transformed the Republican Party, swinging it even further to the right on many issues like immigration, and then considers how much Reagan swung the Republican Party to the right in the 1980s, it makes sense that comparisons would be drawn between the two. However, what shows like *The Reagan's* and what many other figures in the media miss when they try to claim that Trump is just Reagan with Twitter, is that when it comes to what they campaigned on, what they believed, how they acted, and most importantly what they offered to the American voter; Trump and Reagan could not be more diametrically opposed. One was a principled conservative, the other had only few issues on which he could even be considered ideologically consistent. One had prior political experience and an outward respect for institutions like the press, the other had no political experience and waged an unholy public war against his detractors. Reagan offered an unmistakably optimistic view of America and wanted to be heavily involved in global politics, Trump's 2016 campaign painted a horrifically bleak picture of the country and claimed the only way to fix it was by putting “America First.” These two men could not be more different when it

⁴ Schwartz, Jon. “Showtime documentary proves Trump is the 21st century Reagan,” in *The Intercept*. January 4th, 2021. <https://theintercept.com/2021/01/04/trump-reagan-showtime-documentary/>

⁵ CNN, “Ronald Reagan's son on what his dad would think of current GOP,” YouTube Video, 0:17, February 6, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zoi0Fhlc8pk&ab_channel=CNN.

comes to who they are and what they offered voters. So given that is the case, the question again arises; if not Ronald Reagan, who was/were the potential political precursor(s) to Donald Trump?

One possible answer lies in two elections that occurred in the 1990s. The first being Ross Perot's bid for the presidency in 1992, and the second being Jesse Ventura's campaign for governor of Minnesota in 1998. In both of these elections we see outsider candidates, wearing the badge of the outsider loud and proud, touting their non-political experience in the private sector, and most critically; claiming the format of "politics as usual" had become too bureaucratic, too corrupt, and that career politicians were out of touch with the American people. It is for those reasons that these candidates claimed that they could restore a kind of "real" democracy that had somehow been lost.

What must be made clear upfront, however, is that Perot and Ventura's candidacies were not the necessary building blocks that would inevitably lead to president Donald Trump. Rather, their campaigns can show us how in response to a world that was becoming increasingly interconnected, unregulated, and economically unequal, a new type of politics was born that did not have a home in either of the two major parties, because above all else, it was opposed to what the establishment had become. Perot and Ventura recognized this new political energy, leaned into it, and helped to build its momentum. Even after Perot lost in 1992 and 1996, and after Ventura's gubernatorial term ended in 2003, that energy did not die. It merely adapted by finding new leaders and causes to energize. One of those leaders ended up being Donald Trump. This is also not to say that everyone who voted for Donald Trump or who supported him did so because they were motivated by anti-establishment reasons, but Donald Trump made those reasons a centerpiece of his campaign, both in his rhetoric and how he campaigned. In the examples provided earlier, we can see a clear correlation between what Perot, Ventura, and Trump want their voters to know about them; they are not beholden to the

elite or elite interests, career politicians hate them because they are speaking truth to power, and above all they work for *you*, the average American who has been forgotten.

Another thing that should be stated upfront is that while many things about Perot and Ventura's political agendas could be interpreted as new iterations of the long tradition of populist movements in the United States, Perot and Ventura are *not* traditional populists. When I say "traditional populism," I am referring to the political styles and campaigns of people like Louisiana Governor Huey Long, whose "us vs. them" message was rooted in an explicit critique and shunning of *all* political and social elites. Perot, Ventura, and Trump are different; they entered politics having already been elites at some level, therefore their problem with "the elites" or *an* elite is much more focused on a particular section of the elite. This is a crucial distinction and why they are particularly interesting figures to examine when trying to understand the Trump presidency, because some, such as political scientists J. Eric Oliver and Wendy Rahm, have made the argument that "Donald Trump stands out in particular as the populist par excellence," because he "more so than any other candidate, employs a rhetoric that is distinctive in its simplicity, anti-elitism, and collectivism."⁶ While Trump's 2016 campaign may have had some populist undertones, there is a lot about Donald Trump that is not traditionally populist: he is a millionaire who brags constantly about his wealth, he stacked his administration with former bankers and prominent members of corporate America, and perhaps most importantly, he touts the "elite" things about him as evidence of his credibility.

The most common example of this is Trump's proclivity to remind people that he is "highly educated," because he attended the Wharton School of Finance, even touting at one point that while he was there he "met a lot of people, a lot of people heading industry today."⁷

⁶ Oliver, Eric J. et al. "Rise of the "Trumpenvolk": Populism in the 2016 Election," in *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 667. London, Sage Publications, September 2016. 189

⁷ Washington Post. "Wharton is a 'great school.' Just ask Trump," YouTube Video, 1:02, July 9 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39Osnpa0IA&ab_channel=WashingtonPost

Bragging about attending an elite school where you rubbed shoulders with other elites is not exactly what one might think of when imagining traditional populist rhetoric. This is why, in my view, it is inaccurate to see Trump as simply just another populist candidate, and why I think it makes more sense to see his candidacy as a potential outgrowth of Perot and Ventura's candidacies. It was Perot and Ventura that were able to create a type of anti-establishment candidate that was threatening to elites, while simultaneously avoiding a traditional incarnation of populism.

Before one can understand how it is that Perot and Ventura created models for what may have eventually evolved into Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency, it is crucial to understand the historical factors that played a part in creating the world in which anti-establishment sentiment and energy could grow. Today there is a misconception that the history of the United States is one in which the American people always deeply distrusted the political establishment, but Americans have not always felt as apathetic toward the two-party system as they do today. In fact, for a long time, the two-party system functioned quite well and Americans *felt* that it functioned quite well. In order to make sense of how many Americans went from having faith in the political establishment to rallying behind a tech-billionaire for president, electing a former pro-wrestler as governor of Minnesota, and later electing a former reality star as president, one needs to understand the America that existed right after World War II, the liberal consensus that governed it, and how over time that consensus was eroded and replaced by a new consensus that helped create more economic inequality, which then created an opportunity for anti-establishment politics to become more mainstream.

In terms of my research methodology for this paper, the vast majority of my primary sources concerning Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura are their television appearances which took place either during their campaigns, or after their campaigns. This is due in large part to the fact that both of these candidates spent much of their time spreading their messages on television, because that is where they felt they would reach the most Americans. They did not use

television in exactly the same way, as will be made clear. But nonetheless, if one wants to understand how they communicated their message to the American people, it is important to look at what they said when they got on television. In terms of my other primary sources, I also used books, articles, and documents from the time periods I will be covering. My secondary sources consist of books by contemporary historians on the subjects of the New Deal, the student movements of the 1960s, the rise of the right, NAFTA and free trade, neoliberalism, the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent anti-establishment movements, as well as studies by political scientists of the Perot and Ventura campaigns, and polling data on a variety of issues.

Part I. The Post-War Era or When People Believed in Government

Coming out of the Second World War, with much of Europe and Japan in ruins, the United States emerged as the preeminent global superpower. But this newfound international power and respect was also coupled with a dramatic change in lifestyle for many Americans, for as the nation emerged from the Second World War it entered into what historian Gerald Davis calls, “a period of remarkable economic growth, social mobility, and relative income equality.”⁸

Notwithstanding the grotesque inequalities that persisted along racial, gender, and ethnic lines, the post-war period was a time of extreme economic prosperity and upward mobility for the vast majority of Americans. One of the major factors that made this upward mobility possible was President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, which, in the words of historian Jefferson Cowie, “created the foundation for the most equitable American economy since the beginning of the industrial age.”⁹ Under the New Deal state, labor unions were strong, capitalism was checked heavily by the federal government, and corporations, which had historically behaved in ways that exacerbated inequality and hoarded wealth amongst the elite few who ran

⁸ Davis, Gerald F. *The Vanishing American Corporation*. Oakland, Brett-Koehler Publishers, 2016. 43

⁹ Cowie, Jefferson. *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017. 142

them, were forced to reorganize and redistribute that wealth to their employees. In fact, under the New Deal state, corporations played a central role in providing many more Americans with the opportunity to access middle class life. As Gerald Davis points out in his book *The Vanishing American Corporation*, “Growing firms with clear job ladders provided a straightforward path to mobility. An entry-level job with a major corporation that had a strong commitment to promotion from within was a ticket to the middle class.”¹⁰

The ability of the government to deliver transformative material benefits to citizens’ lives created a feeling of trust in institutions, for if the government was taking care of its citizens, why would citizens have reason to distrust it? This high level of trust in institutions during the postwar era can be seen when a high level of trust in government remained well after the end of the Second World War, and by 1958, six years into Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency, public trust in government averaged 73 percent according to the Pew Research Center.¹¹ It is important to remember this in our current age, in which many Americans feel that Congress is endlessly gridlocked, and thus unable to pass even basic social spending bills. In the post-war period, the government was putting forth and approving legislation on infrastructure, education, the arts, healthcare, and scientific research on a regular basis. To give an example, the House of Representatives during the 84th Congress (1955 - 1956) saw 13,169 bills introduced and passed 2,360 of them. During that same year, the Senate saw 4,518 bills introduced and passed 2,550 of them. By contrast, the House during 113th Congress (2013 - 2014) saw just 3,809 bills introduced and only passed 223 of them, while the Senate saw 1,894 bills introduced, and passed only 356 of them.¹² One of the reasons the government worked the way

¹⁰ Davis, Gerald F. *The Vanishing American Corporation*. Oakland, Brett-Koehler Publishers, 2016. 45

¹¹ “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021.” Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy. Pew Research Center, May 28, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/05/17/public-trust-in-government-1958-2021/>.

¹² Ornstein et al. “House Workload, 80th - 113th Congresses, 1947 - 2013,” in *Vital Statistics on Congress*. Brookings Institute, April 18th 2014. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Vital-Statistics-Chapter-6-Legislative-Productivity-in-Congress-and-Workload_UPDATE.pdf

it did at this time was because both parties shared a common agenda, and in this period the agenda of Congress and the president generally tended to be more liberal. The consensus that the government operated under at this time is often referred to as the liberal consensus.

It should be noted that there is debate amongst historians about the liberal consensus; how much it existed, if it even really existed at all, if it should be called the “liberal consensus,” or just how much or little it had an effect on policy making. Some, such as historian Gary Gerstle, have made the more nuanced argument that, “On questions of foreign policy and political economy...a liberal consensus did take shape, but on questions of race, religion, and sexuality it did not,” meaning that whatever consensus existed had far too many limits to be referred to as *the* consensus that informed all policy-making decisions.¹³ This is a good point worth consideration, but when trying to understand how it is that Americans came to feel as though their government does not work, or, more specifically, does not work for them, it can only be understood against the backdrop of a time in which the government *did* work for them. And in the postwar era, representatives were able to work across the aisle with one another to pass legislation that expanded the liberal, New Deal state, ranging from infrastructure projects like the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, to social policy like the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Call it what you want, a common understanding, an unspoken rule, but for the purposes of this paper it will be referred to as the liberal consensus.

The liberal consensus was formed more in response to, rather than in support of, various social movements and geopolitical realities of the time. The Great Depression had shown the nation and the world that capitalism, left unchecked, could cause havoc and destruction, and at the same time the world had seen communism in the Soviet Union take a turn towards brutal authoritarianism under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. Liberalism sat neatly between a world of

¹³ Gerstle, Gary. “The Reach and Limits of the Liberal Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2017. 53

complete unfettered capitalism and a dictatorship “of the proletariat,” and it is because of these realities that many intellectuals and politicians in the United States thought liberalism was the perfect path forward for the country, both domestically *and* internationally.

Historians and pundits at the time, notably Arthur Schlesinger Jr., defined liberalism and described its potential role in being a guiding ideology for the future. Schlesinger made the case for liberalism in his book, *The Vital Center*, in which he layed out, plain and simple for the American people, that the “non-Communist left and the non-fascist right must collaborate to keep society truly free,” meaning that a center-left government that was able to deliver for and take care of its citizens was the most surefire way to prevent the rise of either communism or fascism in the United States and around the world.¹⁴ Liberals like Schlesinger believed that a country in which citizens have true upward mobility, unions are strong, discrimination is addressed through legislation, and the government ensures everyone has their basic needs met, is one in which people would never turn toward strong-men dictators for solutions.

Schlesinger emphasized that the government of a free society *has to* take care of its citizens, because, as he saw it, “both faiths [Communism and Fascism] arose in response to the same frustrations; they bear the imprint of the same defects and failures of free society.”¹⁵ Schlesinger offered up liberalism as the perfect solution to the challenges of his time; it is an ideology that advocates for tolerance of everyone, it could be used to reject communism and fascism, and it supports a strong federal government that affects change in people's lives.

Of course, as is always the case, there were those who were not swayed by Schlesinger's argument or by the promises of liberalism in general. For though there was a consensus within government that resulted in the passing of liberal policies and programs, movements would arise to oppose liberalism. Some of these movements, predictably, came

¹⁴ Schlesinger Jr., Arthur M. *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*. Boston, Da Capo Press, 1949. 209

¹⁵ Schlesinger. 59

from the conservative right, but the movements that sought to undermine the liberal consensus, and which truly *did* undermine it, came from the left-wing of the 1960s.

Part II: The 1960s - New Left, The 1980s - New Right

How does the United States go from a country that had faith in big government and the liberal consensus, to a country that elects a president who says things like “government is not the solution to our problem. Government *is* the problem”?¹⁶ One possible answer would be to point to the rise of the conservative right, beginning with William F. Buckley and *National Review* in the 1950s and 60s, followed by Phyllis Schlafly’s crusade against the ERA in the 1970s, and eventually culminating in Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980. Certainly all of those people and events were a part of how *conservatism* conquered liberalism. However, the rise of the right coincided with the replacement of the liberal consensus with a new governing ideology; neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is not, however, inherently conservative. Sure, a conservative, Ronald Reagan, is credited with ushering in the era of neoliberalism. Historian Gary Gerstle has even gone so far as to say that “the most important figure in the rise of the neoliberal world order was Ronald Reagan.”¹⁷ But many who embraced neoliberalism were not conservatives, and neoliberalism has not ceased to be a *modus operandi* for policy-making whenever there is a more left-wing president in the White House. So how is it that neoliberalism was adopted by *both* sides of the political spectrum while the right was simultaneously rising in power?

Perhaps surprisingly, the left-wing movements of the 1960s may help explain the rise of neoliberalism. While it may initially seem odd, or even inappropriate for some, to link terms like “New Left,” “Counterculture,” “Ronald Reagan,” and “Neoliberalism” together, they all have more

¹⁶ C-SPAN, “President Reagan 1981 Inaugural Address,” CSPAN Video, 7:10, January 20, 1981. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?182163-1/president-reagan-1981-inaugural-address>

¹⁷ Gerstle, Gary. “America’s Neoliberal Order,” in *Beyond the New Deal Order: U.S. Politics From the Great Depression to the Great Recession*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2019. 264

to do with one another than some may expect because these movements and personalities have a few core commonalities; they were anti-bureaucratic/big government, they emphasized individualism, and they rejected New Deal Liberalism. It is the fact that these ideas are so central to the left-wing movements of the 1960s that helps explain both the political success of someone like Ronald Reagan, and how a new consensus in American government, the neoliberal consensus, was created. But before I discuss neoliberalism, Reagan's presidential election, or even the New Left and the Counterculture, I must explain the break-up of the New Deal coalition during the 1960s and the concurrent crisis of liberalism.

New Deal Liberalism in Crisis and The Emergence of Proto-Neoliberals

When the United States entered the 1960s, the liberal consensus was still going strong, and, more importantly, the New Deal coalition (the Democratic Party's voting base) of organized labor, African-Americans, Southern white supremacists, and liberals was still intact. But as the decade progressed, things like civil rights legislation, the Vietnam War, and the New Left and the Counterculture, tore away at that coalition and pitted members of the coalition against each other. A striking example of exactly how fractured the coalition was becoming at this time was the fallout that occurred between union and nonunion workers. As historian Jefferson Cowie explains in his book *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*, "Organized workers, usually white and male, had achieved extraordinary victories in negotiations with employers over the previous decades [prior to the 1960s] and enjoyed benefits of a semi-private welfare system. Nonunion workers...were left out of the club. The fact that nonunion workers were so frequently women and people of color in service occupations complicated the terms, and intensified the tensions, around economic inequality."¹⁸

¹⁸ Cowie, Jefferson. 173 - 174

The fracturing of the New Deal coalition also manifested itself in a concurrent crisis of liberalism as a governing ideology. As the 1960s progressed and liberal policies were put in place in different parts of the country, the expected results of those policies were not always becoming realities. In some cases even, unforeseen problems arose that liberalism could not explain or provide solutions for. One clear example of this was what happened in 1967 in Brooklyn, New York, when the city decided to allow parents in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville district to have more control over their public schools. Four out of five teachers in were white in a district that had become more African American and Latino. The city of New York therefore decided to allow the community to elect a governing board that more accurately represented the racial and ethnic demographics of the neighborhood. For many black and brown students in these schools, this was a hugely positive change, as former student Karriema Jordan recalled, “You felt more accepted. You weren’t the outsider in your own school.”¹⁹ But for the mostly white teachers who had been at these schools, some of whom then found themselves being transferred out of the district to make way for African American and Latino teachers, the feeling was not one of more acceptance, but of discrimination against *them*. As United Federation of Teachers president, Albert Shanker, said at the time, “this would mean that New York City would be faced with the same problem that a lot of other areas are, namely, where local people don’t want whites, there won’t be any whites teaching.”²⁰

The New Deal coalition and the liberal consensus were falling apart during the 1960s, and as they were doing so the upper and middle class youth of America, who had been raised under an expansive, liberal American government, had begun to rebel against it. Movements like the New Left and the Counterculture arose in the 1960s and rejected the status quo.²¹ I

¹⁹ *American Experience: Eyes on the Prize*, season 2, episode 3, “Power! 1966-68,” Directed by Terry Kay Rockefeller and Louis Massah, aired 2006, on Public Broadcasting Service. (PBS, 2006). 40:00

²⁰ *American Experience: Eyes on the Prize*. 40:56

²¹ Books from the time period, such as William Whyte’s *The Organization Man*, began to articulate the conformity and monotony of life in the corporate-dominated New Deal state which so many young people of the time felt compelled to rebel against.

must make a clear distinction between the New Left and the Counterculture, for though they shared similar resentments towards American culture and government, they were distinct movements that should be defined and distinguished.

The New Left was a movement which was spearheaded by organizations like SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), whose manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement*, explicitly embraced “participatory democracy and egalitarianism”; criticized American society as being “undemocratic, bureaucratic, and militaristic”; and which sought to organize young people to work within the system to elect politicians that more accurately reflected their values and the direction they wanted to see the country go in.²² The view of those in the New Left was that their historical moment was, as author and former SDS member Todd Gitlin wrote, defined by “worldwide upheavals seeming to promise the founding of a new age in the ashes of the old.”²³ They felt as if their critiques and activism were the appropriate response to the reality they were faced with, because in their eyes, as Jefferson Cowie explains, liberals and labor unions had become “too bureaucratized, too slow on civil rights, too retrograde on women’s issues, and above all, amongst the staunchest supporters of the war in Vietnam.”²⁴ The New Left saw no utility in preserving the old Democratic coalition that consisted of openly racist white men, workers whose unions were problematic for all the reasons listed above, and liberals who scoffed at them and dictated how the world ought to be from their arm chairs and ivory towers, instead of actually organizing or creating change at a grassroots level.

By contrast, the Counterculture was not an organized political movement, but rather, more of a mindset that was adopted and articulated by people like Timothy Leary and Abbie Hoffman. The Counterculture rejected of societal conformity and engagement in any kind of traditional politics. Their approach to politics was vociferously stated by Hoffman, co-founder of

²² Bloom, Alexander and Wini Breines. *Takin’ It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 60

²³ Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Random House, New York, 1987. 5

²⁴ Cowie, Jefferson. 167

the Yippies (Youth International Party) with Jerry Rubin, in the Yippie Manifesto, which reads, “Don’t vote in a jackass-elephant-cracker circus. Let’s vote for ourselves. Me for President. We are the revolution. We will strike and boycott the election and create our own reality.”²⁵ The differences between the goals of each movement are clear, however, it is their similarities that contributed to the erosion of the liberal consensus and the creation of the neoliberal consensus.

Neoliberalism is a concept that has been described a number of ways, but one good way to think about it is, in the words of economic geographer David Harvey, as “a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade.”²⁶ From the neoliberal perspective, state regulation stifles innovation and creativity, which in turn stifles individual freedom of expression and identity. Neoliberals embraced, as Gary Gerstle explains, “the freedom of movement, the freedom to don different identities, the ability to live cosmopolitan, the ability to think outside the box.”²⁷

There is debate amongst historians as to when exactly neoliberalism as an ideology began. Many will point to Friedrich Hayek, whose 1944 book *Road to Serfdom* warned of the dangers of a government that tried to control the market too much, very much evoking the totalitarian states of Nazi Germany and the USSR as examples of state control of the market gone horribly wrong. Hayek’s writings were, however, interpreted by many in the United States to be anti-welfare state, and therefore anti-New Deal state. Thus, he was embraced by the post-

²⁵ Hoffman, Abbie. “The Yippie Manifesto,” in *Takin’ It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 290

²⁶ Harvey, David. “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction,” in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 610. Sage Publications, London, 2007. 22

²⁷ Gerstle. “America’s Neoliberal Order.” 263

war conservatives who were very much *not* neoliberal and did not become neoliberals because of Hayek, they merely interpreted him as a conservative (which he outwardly rebutted).²⁸

Some, like Gary Gerstle, point to “the rise...of Ronald Reagan and the laissez-faire Republican Party he forced into being” in the 1980s,” as the beginning of neoliberal world order.²⁹ However, the idea that when something becomes policy or is adopted by a political party, it then becomes accepted by all Americans, does not quite sit right. To pin down when neoliberalism “began,” it seems more worthwhile to identify that moment or period of time when a large number of Americans began to conceptualize a function for government which operated outside of the confines of the liberal consensus they had known. Examining the ideas and the language of the New Left and the Counterculture can show us that in many ways they were neoliberal; they just did not think of themselves that way because the term did not exist yet. Their early efforts to fuse anti-statism, individualism, globalism/internationalism, and identity politics into a coherent and revolutionary ideology is what made the New Left and the Counterculture what I am going to call proto-neoliberal movements.

To emphasize just how neoliberal some of the shared values of these movements were at the time, in the Port Huron Statement there is a section on what the properties of the economic system of their ideal society would be. It reads, “that work should..be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; self-directed, not manipulated, encouraging independence...that the economic experience is so personally decisive that the individual must share in its full determination.”³⁰ This language of work as an act of self-fulfillment that happens at the individual level, and that it should be *encouraging* independence and creativity is quite the break from the demands of the labor movement in the early 20th century. It perfectly illustrates a

²⁸ Hayek, Friedrich. “Why I Am Not a Conservative,” in *The Constitution of Liberty*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011. https://press.uchicago.edu/books/excerpt/2011/hayek_constitution.html

²⁹ Gerstle. “America’s Neoliberal Order.” 264

³⁰ SDS. “The Port Huron Statement,” in *Takin’ It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 65

moment in time when all of a sudden, liberal values shift; it's no longer just about people having access to jobs, or a fair wage, or collective bargaining rights, it is now about what *type* of work should exist. To SDS, work that was not satisfying at an individual level was not work worth doing. Those in the Counterculture also echoed this idea, as writer John Sinclair wrote in his 1968 article *Rock and Roll is a Weapon of Cultural Revolution*, "People are now stuck in bullshit jobs...bullshit social and economic scenes, and there's no need for it anymore. Most of the jobs that presently exist are useless and anti-human."³¹ Granted, Sinclair's argument is less of a "what work *should* be" and more of a "what work *is* today" critique, but the sentiment conveyed was shared by both movements.

The language that the New Left and the Counterculture used is the language of entrepreneurship and free-marketeers; it is an attitude that says, "we don't need to be bound to the expectation of getting a job in a big corporate office, doing meaningless work, and conforming to what society wants. Let's do work that *means* something to us. Let's have lives that *mean* something to us. And let's create a world in which we *as individuals* can thrive, do what we want, and be who we want." It is embodied in the person of Steve Jobs, who took his countercultural outlook to the tech world and marketed the personal computer as a tool to nourish our individual creative desires. That at its essence is the neoliberal dream, a de-regulated world of unlimited possibility and interconnectedness for the individual; and it is that dream that the New Left and the Counterculture agreed on.

The New Left and the Counterculture, of course, also embraced communitarianism and social justice. But they did so in a way that highlighted individual self-fulfillment. For example, in the Port Huron Statement, there is a line that reads, "We might deliberately ignore, or avoid, or fail to feel all other human problems, but not these two [struggle against Jim Crow and the Cold War/Threat of atomic war], for these were too immediate and crushing in their impact, too

³¹ Sinclair, John. "Rock and Roll is a Weapon of Cultural Revolution," in *Takin' It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 254

challenging in the demand that we as individuals take the responsibility for encounter and resolution.”³² Even when discussing their own moral duty to humanity, the language of them as individuals is front and center. And when it came to the Counterculture, a similar kind of fusion between activism and individualism took place, as evidenced by Yippie co-founder Jerry Rubin’s essay, *Do It*, in which he wrote, “Yippies are a participatory movement. There are no ideological requirements to be a yippie. Write your own slogan. Protest your own issue. Each man is his own yippie.”³³ In the view of New Leftists and those in the Counterculture, it was almost as if having a commitment to social justice and embracing some form of communitarianism were pure expressions of *their* individualism.³⁴

All of this rebellion against the New Deal order, coupled with the fracturing of the New Deal coalition spelled the beginning of the end for the liberal consensus. The protest at the 1968 Democratic National Convention is viewed by some historians as the moment the 1960s “ended,” as the Democratic Party imploded and began to fall apart. As Todd Gitlin writes in his book, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, “What exploded in Chicago that week [of the DNC in 1968] was the product of pressures that had been building up for almost a decade: the exhaustion of liberalism, the marauding vengefulness of the authorities, the resolve and recklessness of the movement [The New Left], the disintegration of the Democratic Party.”³⁵

While 1968 was certainly a moment of reckoning spurred by the fragmentation of the Democratic Party, it was not *the* moment that the liberal consensus was abandoned by either party; far from it in fact. Rather, what happened in the 1960s was that the Democratic Party and its coalition began to splinter *while* the liberal consensus was kept somewhat intact among

³² SDS. 60

³³ Rubin, Jerry. “Do It,” in *Takin’ It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 291

³⁴ This individualistic approach to social justice and communitarianism was criticized for being contradictory by people like historian Christopher Lasch, whose 1979 book *The Culture of Narcissism*, made that argument.

³⁵ Gitlin. 326

political elites. The clearest example of this is Richard Nixon, who, once elected in 1968, continued to govern under the liberal consensus. As historian Donald Critchlow notes, Nixon created programs like a “supplemental-income program for the poor and a food stamp program,” the Family Planning Services Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and began to push the implementation of affirmative action programs.³⁶ But eventually, the era of the liberal consensus would end, and neoliberalism came to the executive branch with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Rise of the New Right and The Creation of The Neoliberal Consensus

The New Left and the Counterculture were not “the reason” that Reagan became president, nor were they the sole reasons that the liberal consensus began to wane. Reagan and those in the New Left and Counterculture were not allies. After all, Reagan was a conservative. Reagan is even credited, as Donald Critchlow explains in his book *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, with transforming the Republican Party, “into a party of conservatism.”³⁷ But what links the New Left, the Counterculture, and Ronald Reagan is their historical roles in spreading the doctrine of neoliberalism in the United States. The New Left and the Counterculture did it among the youth of America, and Reagan did it at the administrative level. However, it was Reagan’s conservative beliefs that made him attractive to another social movement that was gaining steam in the 1970s and 1980s, and which helped propel him to the White House. That movement became known as The New Right.

The New Right began to gain prominence in the 1970s, mostly in response to the cultural changes that happened in the country throughout the mid-20th century. Prior to the

³⁶ Critchlow, Donald T. *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 2011. 92

³⁷ Critchlow. 173

1970s, however, there was another New Right movement. In the 1950s, figures like William F. Buckley, whose magazine *National Review* was, in Critchlow's words, a "hard-core anti-Communist and anti-New Deal" magazine that served as "a source of conservative news analysis for the educated public," created a New Right movement that was intellectual, meaning it was happening amongst the highly educated.³⁸ Contrast that with the New Right movement of the 1970s, which emphasized "social issues and a populist impulse to challenge the GOP establishment by organizing the grassroots," and which "targeted average Americans, many of whom felt that their culture was under attack by the Left, with its demands for liberation from traditional moral constraints."³⁹ The New Right of the 1970s was in a culture war against the liberals, the New Left, the Counterculture (which was all the same to them).

Up to this point, however, conservatives had not been able to give their message mass appeal on the national political stage. Prior to the 1970s, many of those who were seen as conservatives on the national stage were Southern Democrats. I say that they were "seen as" conservative, because their conservatism was limited primarily to social issues like civil rights. When it came to economic policy, the Southern Democrats were in step with the New Deal liberals. However, their primary issue of "states rights" was, as Critchlow points out, "percieved by most northerners as a euphemism for continuing racial segregation," making it hard for many to disentangle "conservatism" as an ideology from the kind of outward hostile racism of the Jim Crow South.⁴⁰ The closest conservatives had come to the presidency in the postwar era, prior to Reagan, was Barry Goldwater's campaign for president in 1964, which ended in a humiliating, large-scale defeat by Lyndon Johnson. What needed to change was the way that the New Right galvanized voters; they needed to build their own coalition, but to do it they needed to change their approach to politics in order to reach more people; and so they set out to do so.

³⁸ Critchlow. 22

³⁹ Critchlow. 128 - 129

⁴⁰ Critchlow. 38

The New Right developed a revolutionary way to conceptualize politics: the fusion of cultural issues and economic issues. The two began to become interconnected, such that voting based on *cultural* issues meant you were simultaneously voting on *economic* issues. This type of thinking was articulated by figures like conservative pastor Pat Robertson. As historian Kim Philips-Fein writes, Robertson's 1979 Christian Action Plan, "insisted that the moral illness threatening the United States in the late 1970s had its root in the nation's political economy."⁴¹ This framing of political issues re-energized Evangelical Christians, who, throughout much of the 20th century, had not been a very mobilized voting bloc.

Pat Robertson was not alone in this effort to politically galvanize Evangelicals. Evangelical newspapers like Jerry Falwell's *Journal-Champion* "ran articles that argued that the welfare state was "corrupting a whole generation of people," and that Christian politicians needed to "roll forward the clock in progress toward individual initiative and individual freedom and family responsibility in our society."⁴² The anti-welfare state language was a critique of the New Deal state, and similarly to the New Left and the Counterculture, the New Right believed that what the country needed was to restore a sense of "individual initiative" and "individual freedom." Disdain for the homogenous conformity to liberal values under the New Deal state was unanimous amongst the New Right, the New Left, and the Counterculture, but unlike the New Left and the Counterculture, which were social movements that lacked candidates, the New Right *had* a candidate to elect to office who would restore a sense of individualism, deregulate the markets, and end the era of big government: Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan was not your old-school American conservative; he was something new. And in 1980, the United States was desperate for something new in politics. The 1970s was a decade rife with political disillusionment, which was exemplified by the Watergate scandal, the

⁴¹ Fein, Kim Philips. *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against The New Deal*. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2009. 225

⁴² Fein. 229

end of the Vietnam War, and the exhaustion of Keynesian economic practices that did little to ease economic stagflation at home. But despite all of that, many Americans could not conceptualize a political alternative to the liberal consensus, even as it was failing to lift the country out of the many crises of the decade. In Kim Philips-Fein's book *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against The New Deal*, she shows how many Americans were thinking about the Republican Party's future leading up to 1980 by citing an article that ran in *Fortune* magazine in 1977 entitled "The Unmaking of The Republican Party." In that article, the author said that "the [Republican] party was on the verge of disintegration" and it seemed that the party lacked the ability to "chart a new course."⁴³ But of course, Reagan forced the party to chart a new course, just not one that involved New Deal liberalism.

Gary Gerstle explains in his piece "America's Neoliberal Order," that Reagan believed that the "comprehensive regulatory apparatus established by the New Deal had opened the door to Soviet-style collectivism in America," and thus, in order "to protect liberty, the New Deal had to be taken down."⁴⁴ Reagan's anticommunism heavily influenced both his domestic and foreign policy agendas, famously calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire." When he was an actor in Hollywood, prior to his political career, "Reagan encountered Communists up close and personal," as they were at one point "a powerful force in Hollywood."⁴⁵ His anticommunism was one of the many things that changed him from a liberal Democrat to a conservative Republican.

But what separated Reagan from the conservatives of the 1950s New Right, and what poised him to be a leader for the New Right of the 1970s and 80s, was his neoliberal world outlook. As Kim Philips-Fein explains, Reagan personified the fusion of old school cultural conservatism with the new school of liberalized markets by simultaneously "court[ing] the

⁴³ Fein. 238

⁴⁴ Gerstle. "America's Neoliberal Order," 264

⁴⁵ Gerstle. "America's Neoliberal Order." 264

business world while appearing to stand for principles that had little to do with the immediate interests of business at all.”⁴⁶ Reagan embodied what sociologist Daniel Bell described as the “cultural contradiction of capitalism,” which refers to the idea that no traditional value is sacred under capitalism, yet the cultures which live under capitalism care deeply about protecting traditional cultural values.⁴⁷ But to those who supported him, the contradiction did not matter; Reagan’s ability to reinvigorate the economy, America’s standing in the world, and conservatism set the stage for the next forty years of politics in the United States. Reagan’s presidency marked the beginning of the replacement of the liberal consensus with the neoliberal consensus.

Many Americans embraced this change, most notably some of the individuals who were rebelling against American society just a few years earlier. I have already mentioned Steve Jobs, but he is not the only significant countercultural figure to embrace free market capitalism. Co-founder of the Yippies, Jerry Rubin, was one prominent member of the Counterculture who made the full conversion from tie-dye wearing rebel-without-a-job to successful neoliberal capitalist. After years of rebelling against the American empire and corporations, Rubin, as historian Doug Rossinow writes, “embraced capitalism.”⁴⁸ By the 1980s, Rubin felt that his generation now had a real opportunity to remake the world anew, because unlike their past efforts in the 1960s, they now had real power in the form of entrepreneurial capital. Rubin even opened a 1985 debate with his former countercultural partner, Abbie Hoffman, who disagreed with the direction Rubin’s life had gone after the 1960s, by saying, “to those people who say that because we put on a tie or changed our dress a little bit; we’ve sold out. I say that’s absurd. We’re taking over.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Fein. 242

⁴⁷ Bell, Daniel. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York, Basic Books, 1976.

⁴⁸ Rossinow, Doug. *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015. 121

⁴⁹ Steve Henley, “Yippie Versus Yuppie,” YouTube Video, 5:57, February 3rd, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOFBAJ8BIJs&ab_channel=SteveHenley

As neoliberal policies were being implemented throughout the 1980s, and as both the Republican and Democratic parties began to embrace neoliberalism as party doctrine in the 1990s, not all Americans were on board with what they saw happening in the political establishment. Many Americans, as a matter of fact, believed that both parties were abandoning them and their interests, in order to serve conservative culture warriors, limousine liberals, and corporate interests. In 1992, these Americans decided to get organized and throw their weight behind an anti-establishment candidate for president, a candidate who would once again, shake up the American political landscape.

Part III: 1992 - The Specter of Ross Perot

In 1992, for the first and only time since 1912, the United States saw a third party presidential candidate get almost 1/5th of all votes cast.⁵⁰ How did that happen? Why did that happen? There are plenty of things one could point to as reasons the nation believed that two parties were not up to the challenges of the day; the L.A. riots which prompted calls for racial justice, the tax increase that then-president George H.W. Bush had promised he would not do but then ultimately did, or the Great Chicago Flood which destroyed key infrastructure in America's third largest city. All of these events certainly could have influenced people's political decisions one way or the other, but were any of them the reason a Texas billionaire offered himself up as a candidate to run against the political establishment? The short answer is, no. H. Ross Perot did not come onto the political scene in response to any of these particular issues or events. Rather, his candidacy was primarily fueled by one issue; free trade in the form of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and the consequences it would bring to average Americans.

"Free trade" is a term that has had different meanings in American political circles for centuries, but it really began to take on more neoliberal connotations of being associated with

⁵⁰ Rosenstone, Steven J. et al. *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure - Updated and Expanded Second Edition*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996. 231

interconnectedness and *political* freedom during the Cold War. Even as early as the 1960s, president John F. Kennedy was embracing this new conception of free trade, as former-president of the Export-Import Bank of the United States under President Obama, Fred Hochberg, notes in his book, *Trade Is Not a Four Letter Word: How Six Everyday Products Make the Case for Trade*. Hochberg writes that, “by 1962...open markets became a signifying feature of life in the “free” - that is to say, non-Communist - world,” and so, “For Kennedy, free trade was a way to keep the world itself free.”⁵¹ This idea, that free trade can only exist between free countries, also became central to another Cold Warrior’s position on free trade. That Cold Warrior was none other than Ronald Reagan.

During his presidency, Reagan echoed Kennedy’s conceptualization of free trade as a political tool that would foster the exchange of ideas in addition to goods and services, but went even further in terms of what he believed it had the power to do. As journalist John R. MacArthur notes in his book *The Selling of “Free Trade”: NAFTA, Washington, and the Subversion of American Democracy*, Reagan articulated his vision of free trade in a speech he gave in 1983, in which he said, “We worship the same God. From the tip of Tierra del Fuego to the north slopes of Alaska, we are all Americans, a new breed of people...I have a vision of a united hemisphere, united not by the arbitrary bonds of state but by the voluntary bonds of free ideals.”⁵² Reagan went beyond Kennedy’s conceptions of free trade by believing that it not only had the power to free the world from the oppression of authoritarian governments, but it could also free citizens from the confinement of national identity. Though his rhetoric on free trade may have been inspiring to some people, Reagan’s advocacy was not, however, the only factor that pushed the United States toward embracing free trade during the 1980s.

⁵¹ Hochberg, Fred P. *Trade is Not a Four Letter Word*. New York, Avid Reader Press, 2020. 20 - 21

⁵² MacArthur, John R. *The Selling of “Free Trade”: NAFTA, Washington, and the Subversion of American Democracy*. New York, Hill and Wang, 2000. 96

Beginning in the 1970s, major economic changes were taking place, both domestically in the United States and internationally. Deindustrialization, the rise of the tech and finance industries, and new foreign competition all contributed to a new economic environment that was different from the global economy of the postwar era in which the United States had become so prosperous. Thus, to remain competitive in this new economy, the United States had to adapt. This adaptation involved, in Fred Hochberg's words, the U.S. economy "facilitating the growth of higher-paying, higher-tech sectors in exchange for ceding ground on lower paying, lower-tech industries."⁵³

Some of these changes, such as the deindustrialization of the economy and the shutdown of countless manufacturing plants (the "ceding" of lower paying, lower-tech industries), hurt many Americans and led to the creation of what became known as The Rust Belt, meaning the formerly industrialized states primarily in the Midwest. But other changes, such as the rise of the new tech and finance industries, were seen by some as exactly what the country needed to move forward. As historian Margaret O'Mara writes in her book *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*, "After more than ten years of unrelentingly dismal business news [prior to the 1980s] - plant shutdowns, blue-collar jobs vanishing overseas, fumbling corporate leaders, and the pummeling of American brands by foreign competitors - high tech companies presented a bright, promising contrast."⁵⁴ The old world of the liberal consensus, giant manufacturing corporations, and highly regulated trade was being replaced by the new neoliberal world of free trade and free markets. For many in the political establishment, like Reagan and his successor George H.W. Bush, fostering free trade was an essential part of the growth of this new world and economy. Therefore, once Bush took office in 1989,

⁵³ Hochberg. 46

⁵⁴ O'Mara, Margaret. *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*, New York, Penguin Press, 2019. 3

negotiating free trade agreements was a top priority, and so began the process of negotiating what would come to be known as NAFTA.

What was the goal of NAFTA? What did Bush, and later Clinton, hope that it would do? According to Fred Hochberg, who is very much pro-NAFTA, it “was created to bring the U.S., Mexico, and Canada together as seamless trade partners and a formidable economic bloc.”⁵⁵ From the perspective of John MacArthur, who is highly critical of the agreement, “The whole point of NAFTA was to make it even easier for U.S. factories to take advantage of cheap labor and weak regulation, and to lock the two countries [U.S. and Mexico] into a low - or no - tariff deal that neither could easily escape.”⁵⁶ Depending on your political persuasion and/or background, you may find yourself agreeing with one interpretation or the other. But regardless of which interpretation seems more accurate, when the idea for the agreement was initially proposed to some the federal government, which was already accepting neoliberalism as an ideological basis for policy-making, it was not met with unanimous support. Beginning in the early 1990s, when the Bush administration began discussing the possibility of the treaty with the Mexican and Canadian governments, they simultaneously had to try and convince key members of the political establishment, most notably Democratic majority leader Richard Gephardt, to support or at least not inhibit their ability to negotiate the agreement. Which begs the question; why? Why were some members of Congress, like Gephardt, unsure about NAFTA? After all, as MacArthur notes, Gephardt himself “had supported...the CUFTA (Canada - United States Free Trade Agreement) in 1988 and a free trade agreement with Israel in 1985,” so what was it about NAFTA that caused some within the political establishment to pause and think twice.

Perhaps the biggest sticking point for those members of Congress who were less enthusiastic about NAFTA, was the fact that it de-regulated trade with Mexico. For them, as MacArthur explains, this meant that the “agreement intended to lock in access for American

⁵⁵ Hochberg. xxvii

⁵⁶ MacArthur. 105

companies to a gigantic source of cheap labor right across the border of the United States.”⁵⁷ A group of primarily Democrats, though conservative Republican Pat Buchanan was also echoing their worries, were very concerned about what a free trade relationship with Mexico could mean for American manufacturing. Gephart in particular was concerned about this, and without his support, Bush would not be able to get the fast-track authority required to negotiate the deal on behalf of Congress. But after much deliberation and assurance from the Bush administration, Gephart eventually agreed to support giving Bush fast-track authority. A few years later, when asked by John MacArthur to defend that action, part of his response seemed to buy into the neoliberal promise of the power of free trade: “If we can use trade to move us in a beneficial direction, not just for the businesses that benefit but for all the consumers and all the workers and all the people, then you’ve really got something that can engender deep political support.”⁵⁸ This change in attitude points to something that is key to understanding why so many Americans felt that an independent candidate may have been the best way to oppose NAFTA, because if a Democrat like Richard Gephart could be swayed by the promise of a free trade agreement with Mexico, what political means were there to push back against the passage of NAFTA?

It is with all of these factors in mind - deindustrialization, new industries replacing the old ones, foreign competition, the potential of even more job losses because of NAFTA, and the political establishment seemingly on board with all of it - that an anti-establishment sentiment and energy developed among many Americans who were looking for a way to make their voices heard. By 1992, George H.W. Bush was up for re-election on a pro-NAFTA platform, and then-Governor Bill Clinton was leading the Democratic ticket on a pro-NAFTA platform. There seemed to be no political alternative to the passage of NAFTA. Or at least, there *was* no political alternative, until a folksy, Texas billionaire threw his hat in the ring and decided to run for

⁵⁷ MacArthur. 102

⁵⁸ MacArthur. 105

president, framing himself as a vessel for the millions of Americans who felt that the establishment had forgotten about them.

As was stated at the beginning of this paper, Ross Perot claimed that his campaign was the result of a movement that “came from millions of people in fifty states all over this country, who wanted a candidate that worked and belonged to nobody but them,” but one may reasonably wonder: why *him*?⁵⁹ What made this politically inexperienced billionaire, who harped against the political establishment, jobs going overseas, and the deficit, the right political vessel for those who felt anger toward the political establishment at this time in history? It is a difficult question to answer, though that has not stopped many from trying.

Beginning in 1992, all the way up to our current day, academics have offered differing interpretations of what Perot’s 1992 campaign for the presidency even was, why it was as successful as it was, and what kind of political figure Ross Perot was. Some, such as political scientists Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, say that the reason Perot’s 1992 candidacy was particularly successful was because “throughout American history, every independent candidate has been strapped for resources, but not the Texas billionaire, Ross Perot,” and that “thanks to his strong standing in the polls and his skillful working of the television and radio talk show circuit, Perot enjoyed more extensive and more positive coverage than third party candidates usually do.”⁶⁰ Others, such as cultural theorist Linda Schulte-Sasse, have argued that Perot’s appeal lay in his “crafting of a fictional political scenario heavily indebted to the same populism that inspired American pop culture of the 30’s and 40’s,” which led to a campaign that was “anchored in aestheticized politics and thus generate[d] an aestheticized relationship between him and the followers who mirror themselves in him.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ PBS Newshour, “Bush, Clinton, and Perot: The first 1992 presidential debate,” YouTube Video, 1:54, September 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWo88Lr0rzw&t=276s>.

⁶⁰ Rosenstone, Steven J. et al. 232

⁶¹ Schulte-Sasse, Linda. “Meet Ross Perot: The Lasting Legacy of Capraesque Populism,” in *Cultural Critique No. 25 (Autumn, 1993)*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 92

But perhaps Perot's candidacy and political legacy have most poignantly been summed up by historian Julian Zelizer, who wrote in 2019 when Perot died, that "we are currently living deep in the world that Perot helped create." Linking Perot and Donald Trump as outsiders who had unique approaches to mass media as a political tool, Zelizer explains that "By the 1990s, the news media offered a way for candidates to say what they wanted when they wanted to say it," and that Perot understood that and took advantage of it by frequently appearing on shows like Larry King Live and producing 30-minute infomercials in which he explained the issues he was campaigning on, often using charts and graphs that he made himself. Perot also understood "that television shows had to keep their viewers interested," and so as he was using television to campaign and get his message out, "Perot [also] became a character in his own story."⁶²

Even so, Perot as a candidate is just as hard to define now as he was in 1992; he was not really left-wing, nor was he really right-wing, as he talked constantly about wanting to reduce the deficit (a fairly conservative position), but at the same time he was "also pro-choice, supported LGBT civil rights, and openly suggested expanding Medicare to cover all Americans."⁶³ Even on his primary issue of NAFTA, Perot was also similarly hard to pin down, as he was both pro-free trade, but anti-NAFTA. In fact, during a 1993 debate on Larry King Live with then-Vice President Al Gore on the issue of NAFTA, King asked Perot, "Weren't you a free trader always, Ross?" to which Perot responded, "I am a free-trader now."⁶⁴ Later in the debate Perot clarified that he was in favor of *some* form of NAFTA, it was just this particular agreement he was against. But when asked what his ideal free trade agreement looked like, he did not have much to offer in terms of specifics.

⁶² Zelizer, Julian. "Ross Perot, who lost an election and transformed the world," on *CNN.com*. July 9, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/09/opinions/how-ross-perot-shaped-our-world-zelizer/index.html>

⁶³ Hochberg. 34

⁶⁴ CNN, "Ross Perot battles Al Gore in 1993 NAFTA debate," YouTube Video, 4:11, September 2, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fi8OOAKuGQ&t=318s&ab_channel=CNN

Perot did not fit into the political camps defined by the new neoliberal establishment, and furthermore he was *against* them entirely. One of Perot's main points of anger towards the establishment was his perception of their unwillingness to take accountability for things like the rising deficit, and how each of the major political parties, in his view, seemed to just blame the other when things were not going their way. He used the debates between himself, Bush, and Clinton to air these grievances, and to paint himself as someone who was above partisan politics and could therefore be a more effective leader. At one point during the first of three debates, Perot responded to Bush's claim that his political experience made him the best candidate by saying, "I don't have any experience in running up a \$4 trillion debt. I don't have any experience in gridlocked government where nobody takes responsibility for anything and everybody blames everybody else...But I do have a lot of experience in getting things done."⁶⁵ It was moments like that which help explain Perot's appeal; his rejection of politics as usual, and his ability to frame his campaign as a genuine break from many of the things that made politics frustrating, like gridlock and lack of accountability, was his strength.

In addition, his private sector experience, or what he marketed as his ability to "get things done," was something that complicates the critique of someone like Linda Schulte-Sasse, who, as was mentioned earlier, branded Perot's style of politics as "indebted to the same populism that inspired American pop culture in the 30's and 40's."⁶⁶ Perot was first and foremost a businessman, and that was clear in how he presented himself to voters; not as *against* big business, but as part of the business world. He touted his knowledge of the business world as a huge asset, even saying during one of his famous 30-minute infomercials; "This year, in this

⁶⁵ PBS Newshour, "Bush, Clinton, Perot: The first 1992 presidential debate," YouTube Video, 8:00, September 26, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWo88Lr0rzw&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

⁶⁶ Schulte-Sasse. 92

election, the issue is jobs...You could vote for the politics as usual candidates, or you could vote for the man who has created tens of thousands of jobs on his own, in the private sector.”⁶⁷

As I mentioned earlier, touting the elite things about oneself, like experience running a billion-dollar corporation, as evidence of one’s credibility to lead is not a traditionally populist thing to do. It certainly is not something that a Capra-esque film hero would do, as Schulte-Sasse suggests. It does not portray one as separate from *an* establishment, quite the opposite in fact. Rather, Perot’s brand of anti-establishment politics was one that utilized both his insider business knowledge, and his outsider status in the world of politics. He could talk up his experience inside the elite world of business, while speaking as an outsider when it came to what was going on in Washington; one of those things lent him an heir of credibility to many people, while the other positioned him firmly away from the world that George Bush and Bill Clinton occupied. This becomes evident when one examines how Perot’s supporters saw him on certain issues, as political scientists Ronald B. Rappoport and Walter J. Stone explain in their book *Three’s a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and Republican Resurgence*.

Using polling data, Rappoport and Stone show that in 1992, Perot supporters viewed him overwhelmingly positively in contrast to Bush and Clinton on the issues of trustworthiness, the economy, and whether he really “care[d] about people.” But on the issue of foreign policy, something Perot had little experience with outside the issues of trade and the outsourcing of jobs, Bush rated higher than Perot.⁶⁸ Apart from his grievances about the gridlock in Washington, the rising deficit, and his ability to leverage his private sector credentials while appearing to be a political outsider, Perot also built his appeal by focusing on what he felt, and what many who were opposed to the establishment in 1992 felt was the main issue that would

⁶⁷ Samuel Wilson, “Ross Perot 1992 - How to Build a Business and Create Jobs,” YouTube Video, 1:02, March 9, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75aNW3vrLPs&ab_channel=SamuelWilson

⁶⁸ Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. *Three’s a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and the Republican Resurgence*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2007. 103 - 104

determine the course of the nation in the near future; free trade and the economic inequality it could cause.

There is debate today about what the real costs of NAFTA were at the end of the day. Some, like Fred Hochberg, argue that “while it is certainly possible that, without NAFTA, the steady decline of the manufacturing sector as a source of American jobs would have plateaued or somehow reversed itself, there’s simply no substance to the argument that the deal created (or, frankly, even exacerbated) a problem that wasn’t already in existence.”⁶⁹ Whether or not NAFTA did lead to the decline of American manufacturing, and whether or not it did result in a “giant sucking sound going south” as Perot famously claimed that it would, many who voted for him in 1992 were certainly very concerned that it *could*. As Rappoport and Stone note, leading up to the 1992 election, the issue of NAFTA “represented more threat than opportunity to many workers.”⁷⁰ Since both major parties eventually got behind the trade agreement, many Americans who were worried about the consequences of NAFTA chose to break from traditional politics and put their weight behind a candidate who rejected the mainstream altogether. But it would of course be inaccurate to paint all Perot voters as motivated to break from politics as usual because of one issue; there were many other reasons people had for wanting to buck the two-party system by supporting Perot. However, NAFTA, and the economic inequality it would create, was the issue that helps explain; why 1992? Why not sooner or later? Because NAFTA was supported by Bush Sr. first, and later Clinton; it had enough bipartisan consensus. Nonetheless, the various reasons people voted for Perot, or even entertained the idea of him, must be explored further to understand the appeal of his brand of anti-establishment politics.

A specter was haunting the United States in the early 1990s, the specter of anti-establishment politics. Going into the 1992 election there was already, in the words of political scientist Howard Gold, “a strong anti-partisan sentiment in the electorate,” as well as, “an

⁶⁹ Hochberg. 47

⁷⁰ Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. 49

apparent surge in public frustration with government and politics,” leading many Americans to believe that “the government was not acting in their interests anymore.”⁷¹ Ross Perot, therefore, did not need to convince many Americans that they had reason to be upset with politics as usual; the country had arrived there on its own. Perot recognized this, and like a businessman, saw it for what it was; an opportunity. Perot, however, framed his candidacy from the get-go as one that would have to appear to come *from* the people. After all, if it appeared to be a vanity project for a billionaire, ordinary people may have been less inclined to support him. Perot’s effort to emphasize the grassroots nature of his campaign can be seen in any number of media appearances he did in both the lead up to the campaign and during the campaign. Rappoport and Stone reference a particular appearance Perot did on a local radio show in Nashville, Tennessee in February of 1992, in which he responded to a question about what was then a possible run for the presidency by saying, “if you feel so strongly about it, register me in fifty states. If it’s forty-nine, forget it. If you want to do fifty states, you care that much, fine, then I don’t belong to anybody but you.”⁷²

Perot’s unique campaign was criticized a lot at the time by those in the media. His infomercials were even spoofed on Saturday Night Live.⁷³ But for all the talk of his self-financing, his infomercials, and the countless media appearances that Perot did during his campaign for the presidency, he always stressed that the reason he was running was because Americans, not special interests or PAC money, put him on the ballot. The grassroots element of Perot’s campaign really did separate him from his opponents, and it therefore makes sense that those who felt that the government “was not acting in their interests anymore” would see Perot’s candidacy as more legitimate in many ways. Yes, he was a billionaire. Yes, he was

⁷¹ Gold, Howard J. “Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace,” in *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1995. 755

⁷² Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. 55

⁷³ Saturday Night Live, “Ross Perot Cold Open: Fighting the Deficit - Saturday Night Live,” YouTube Video, October 4, 2013.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_RtNzJyAJk&ab_channel=SaturdayNightLive

difficult to define politically. But Perot tapped into a genuine feeling of anger towards the political establishment on the issue of free trade, and it seemed, for a time, that he offered a real option away from them.

Perot obviously did not win the 1992 election, but he did give Bush and Clinton a real run for their money, even taking the lead in the race in early May of that year, and, as Rappoport and Stone explain, “by later that month, Perot was the choice of 33 percent of the electorate, compared with 28 percent for Bush and 24 percent for Clinton.”⁷⁴ And when election day finally did come, as Howard Gold notes, Perot did extremely well with, “Independents (30 percent of them voted for Perot), respondents whose financial situation had deteriorated over the previous four years (25 percent), voters under the age of thirty (22 percent)...first time voters (22 percent)...voters who cared about the budget deficit (37 percent) and the economy (24 percent).”⁷⁵

If anything, Perot’s 1992 campaign revealed that there were a great many Americans from various backgrounds who had real issues with the neoliberal consensus that was taking shape in government and the policies that came with it. And even though they could not send Perot to the White House, it did not mean that their grievances would go away or that all of them would eventually find a home in either of the two parties. It also did not mean that *Perot* would go away, as he would later go on to run for president again in 1996, under the banner of his new political party, the Reform Party.

As Rappoport and Stone see it, “In creating the Reform Party, Perot claimed to be building an enduring alternative force in American politics,” and in classic Perot fashion, he launched the party in 1995 on none other than Larry King Live.⁷⁶ Initially, the party did generate some interest, including from “multi-billionaire entrepreneur Donald Trump,” who was briefly

⁷⁴ Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. 56 - 57

⁷⁵ Gold, Howard J. 755

⁷⁶ Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. 14

interested in running for president in 2000 as a Reform candidate. But when it came to the electorate, the interest was not nearly at the level that Perot's 1992 campaign had generated. At the end of the day, the party "implod[ed] over a divisive leadership fight when Perot did not run [for president] again in 2000."⁷⁷ The Reform Party could have been, and perhaps is considered by many to be, a blip in the history of the United States. But I would argue that the Reform Party is worth remembering because of its most successful member, who, in 1998, won the gubernatorial election in the state of Minnesota, and who would once again reshape anti-establishment politics as the United States entered the new millennium.

Part IV: Jesse Ventura Retaliates in '98

To understand the 1998 Minnesota gubernatorial election, one thing must first be made crystal clear; Minnesota politics are not conventional by any means. I say this partly to help frame the election of Jesse Ventura to the office of governor within the larger context of anti-establishment movements nation-wide, and partly to butt up against statements that Ventura himself has made about running on for president, as he loudly asserted in a 2015 interview, "if I run for president, if they let me in the debates, I'd win that too."⁷⁸ Jesse Ventura certainly had mass appeal in the 1998 Minnesota gubernatorial election, and may still have national appeal now, but he also had the benefit of running in a state whose political landscape had already been defined by "outsider," or populist politics.

What makes Ventura's 1998 campaign unique, and why he is worth examining in the history of anti-establishment politics, was how he changed what it meant to be "against the establishment." In his campaign, he successfully utilized his celebrity status, countercultural language, and his knack for keeping the media's attention by being profane, crass, seemingly

⁷⁷ Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. 74

⁷⁸ Graham Bensinger, "Jesse Ventura: I could win the presidential election," YouTube Video, 2:24, December 23, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ2es2vAnDQ&ab_channel=GrahamBensinger

off-the-cuff, with a strong anti-establishment message; taking care to fuse his rebellious attitude and persona with his political message so that they were one in the same. In contrast to Ross Perot who went on television with his homemade charts and graphs and tried to respectfully disagree with his political opponents, Ventura came into politics ready to wage war against the establishment, and he made his presence known in the political arena by shaking things up purely for the sake of it. These distinctions also help make it clear why Ventura was not a traditional populist either, as he utilized his existing celebrity (elite) status, echoed critiques of government bureaucracy similar to those of the Counterculture, and ran for office to “stick it to the man.”

It is no exaggeration to say that since its inception, the state of Minnesota has had an eclectic political history. As historian Jennifer Delton explains, from the mid-1850s when Minnesota officially gained statehood all the way up until the mid-20th century, the state “had been home to a variety of self-consciously anti-party, sometimes radical third parties and farmers’ movements, including the Anti-Monopoly party, the Greenback party, the People’s party, the Prohibition party, any number of Socialist parties, and the Nonpartisan league.”⁷⁹ The most successful third party in the state’s history, however, was the Farmer-Labor party, which eventually merged in 1944 with the ineffective Minnesota Democratic Party to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party.⁸⁰ From 1944 when the DFL was formed, until 1998 when Ventura ran for governor, state politics in Minnesota did operate more-or-less alongside the national framework of a two-party system, but understanding that it had not *always* been that way helps explain why when Jesse Ventura ran anti-establishment campaigns, first for mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota in 1990, and then for governor in 1998, he was not immediately discounted by the public. Third parties had a long history in the state, and though the two-party

⁷⁹ Delton, Jennifer. *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 2

⁸⁰ Delton. 17

system had become the norm around the country, it was not an iron-clad rule in a state like Minnesota. Within that context, it is important to understand who Jesse Ventura was, why he decided to enter politics at all, and, more importantly, why he chose to do so as a third party candidate. I should note that there has not been much historical scholarship on Ventura, or, more specifically, his campaign for governor. Thus, it is not entirely clear what historians make of him, other than, perhaps, that he was an aberration. That being said, there are political scientists and journalists who have written about the Ventura campaign, and it is their work that I will primarily be relying on in my analysis.

Jesse Ventura was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Before the 1990s, he had already had multiple careers in the Navy (fighting in the Vietnam War), professional wrestling, and as a Hollywood actor.⁸¹ He was perhaps best known (prior to entering politics) for his work in professional wrestling, where he earned his signature nickname, “The Body.” Ventura was not the type of guy anyone would have immediately considered for a career in politics, and that was not solely because he had come from the entertainment industry (Ronald Reagan had already shown that was not a disqualifier); rather, it had more to do with his attitude towards government and institutions themselves. I would argue that much of Ventura’s political passion came from his disdain for government bureaucracy in particular, as evidenced by his initial reason to run for mayor of Brooklyn Park, the town he lived in, in 1990.

According to political scientists Stephen I. Frank and Steven C. Wagner, “Ventura sought the mayor’s position in Brooklyn Park because he disagreed with proposed zoning changes across the street from his home. He argued that the established politicians were not listening to the voters and enacting policy based on their private agendas.”⁸² This episode makes it clear why Jesse Ventura wanted to get into politics, because *he* was being negatively

⁸¹ *Jesse Ventura*. National Governors Association. Accessed March 6, 2022. <https://www.nga.org/governor/jesse-ventura/>

⁸² Frank, Stephen I. et al. *We Shocked the World: A Case Study of Jesse Ventura’s Election as Governor of Minnesota*. San Diego, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999. 13

affected by political decisions. His campaign for mayor of Brooklyn Park, in his words, was about fighting against the “private agendas” of “established politicians,” but exactly which private agenda was he fighting against? Zoning in front of *his* house? Which is not to assume that there were not other Minnesotans in his neighborhood who had issues with the zoning proposals, but none of them ran for mayor over it. In this example, however, we see that Ventura’s career in politics began as one that was self-serving. But the question then becomes, did he continue to have that approach to politics when he ran for governor eight years later?

Yes. Ventura’s 1998 campaign for governor began, as he put it in a 2015 interview, because “the state of Minnesota had, I think, a one or two billion dollar budget surplus...they brought in two billion dollars more than they needed. Well you know what they did with it? Spent it. They had no right to do that, that’s *our* money. I was outraged over that. So I said [on statewide talk radio] maybe I oughta run for governor. Oh my god, it took off like wildfire, and then I was caught. I had to do it.”⁸³ Much like his run for mayor, Ventura’s gubernatorial run was, yet again, something that began because of a personal grievance *he* had with the way he perceived the government bureaucracy in his state was functioning. But, as Frank and Wagner note in their book *“We Shocked the World!” A Case Study of Jesse Ventuar’s Election as Governor of Minnesota*, while this issue of the state budget surplus “was a major factor in Ventura’s decision to run for governor,” and he even promised voters that “upon taking office, [he would] give back the surplus,” he soon found out that “the surplus was previously committed to a modest property tax rebate and several capital projects by the legislature.”⁸⁴

His ignorance about how the government actually functioned, which did not stop him from getting up in arms over his belief that public officials were corrupt, manifested itself in what Frank and Wagner have dubbed Ventura’s “style over substance campaign,” allowing him to

⁸³ Graham Bensinger. 0:22

⁸⁴ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 13

essentially “campaign on his personality.”⁸⁵ But what his political ethos also points to is the even larger point of how Jesse Ventura saw himself; as inherently anti-establishment. Whatever the establishment politicians were, in his mind at least, he was *not*. In reflecting on his third party candidacy and term as governor, he does not even refer to himself as a politician. This was illustrated in another 2015 interview, when, after being referred to as a politician, Ventura responded, “I’m not a politician, I’m a statesman. Here’s the difference; a politician makes it his career, a statesman serves and then goes back to what he or she used to do. I’m a statesman.”⁸⁶ That is how he *still* sees himself, and that was how he wanted the public to see him in 1998: as inherently removed from politics altogether. Though that did not mean that Ventura did not identify where he stood politically, as Howard Gold writes, “[Ventura] repeatedly described himself as a fiscal conservative and a social liberal.”⁸⁷ But like Ross Perot before him, Ventura did not fit easily into the boxes that existed within the mainstream neoliberal political landscape. However, while Perot and Ventura were comparable in some ways, they were vastly different in many other ways, and the differences between them began to show when Ventura joined the Reform Party.

When it came time for Ventura to run for governor in 1998, he chose to register as a Reform Party candidate. Why did Ventura do this? Perhaps because he wanted to be viewed as someone who would “reform” government, or perhaps he wanted the Reform party to become a viable third party option. This was evidenced by the fact that, as Frank and Wagner explain, during Ventura’s campaign “he tried to obtain support from the national Reform party but failed to win Ross Perot’s enthusiasm.”⁸⁸ It may be surprising to some that Perot did not outwardly

⁸⁵ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 17

⁸⁶ CGTN America, “Jesse Ventura discusses third party candidates in the US presidential elections,” YouTube Video, 0:45, October 13, 2015.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fBA4aQk96k&ab_channel=CGTNAmerica

⁸⁷ Gold, Howard J. “Third-Party Voting in Gubernatorial Elections: A Study of Angus King of Maine and Jesse Ventura of Minnesota.” *Polity* 35, no. 2. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002. 270.

⁸⁸ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 25

support Ventura's campaign for governor. After all, Ventura was registered in his new political party and was also against the establishment. But a close examination of these men reveals two main differences that show just how at-odds their conceptualizations of "being anti-establishment" were, and why Perot was not particularly enthused by Ventura's candidacy.

First, as was stated previously, while Perot was certainly against what the establishment was doing, he was not at war with them and did not treat his campaign as an act of war against them. Ventura on the other hand, was at war with the establishment on every issue and made his whole campaign about it. This was exemplified by his slogan, which was "Retaliate in '98" (retaliate for *what* exactly? Against whom?). Second, and perhaps the most important difference between these two men, was that Perot tried very hard to frame his campaign as the result of "a movement that came from the people." Ventura's campaign, by contrast, could have been given the title "Jesse Ventura vs. The Establishment." It was about, above all else, Jesse Ventura "sticking it to the man." And stick it to the man he did.

One other way to look at it is this; Ross Perot's campaign was the manifestation of a larger movement that arose in response to a changing economic environment that excluded the concerns of primarily working class individuals who felt as though their financial situation was just going to continue to deteriorate unless immediate action was taken. Ventura's campaign, on the other hand, seemed to be a manifestation of the anti-establishment anger articulated by the counterculture in the 1960s, just done three decades too late. It was the embodiment of Abbie Hoffman's declaration in the Yippie Manifesto, "'Don't vote in a jackass-elephant-cracker circus. Let's vote for ourselves. Me for President.'"⁸⁹ As Frank and Wagner make clear in their research, "Ventura seemed to be a mirror image of [his] voters," thus, in a way, his voters really were voting for themselves.⁹⁰ Having made this distinction between Perot and Ventura, the question

⁸⁹ Hoffman, Abbie. "The Yippie Manifesto," in *Takin' It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. 290

⁹⁰ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 20

might reasonably be asked, “if Perot had a movement behind him, and Ventura ran for himself, why did Ventura win and Perot lose?” There is no simple answer to this question, but there are a variety of reasons that one could point to as explanations for Ventura’s success, despite the lack of a full-fledged political movement behind him like the one that put Ross Perot on the ballot in 1992.

For starters, Jesse Ventura was running for governor, not for president, and though campaigning as a third party candidate is its own challenge unto itself, it is much harder to do at the national level. Second, Jesse Ventura was running against two candidates who were seen as “safe bets” by the two major parties. As Frank and Wagner put it, “The Republican party nominated a pragmatic conservative. The DFL Party nominated a pragmatic liberal. The two parties saw their candidates as “safe bets”...[and] felt safe [in their decisions] since most indicators suggested voters would support the status quo.”⁹¹ And to their point that “most indicators suggested voters would support the status quo,” there is some truth to that. In the late 1990s, the economy was doing phenomenally well. Even Ventura described it as a time when “everybody was making huge money,” and so it may seem odd that Minnesotans would want to oust their establishment politicians.⁹² After all, if people are doing well financially, what cause is there to shake up the system that is benefiting those same people?

Frank and Wagner propose the idea that perhaps “the strong socioeconomic indicators...created an environment where voters were willing to take a chance on a candidate that did not represent that status quo,” meaning that *because* things were so good economically, rather than in spite of it, people were willing to make a political gamble.⁹³ While this does provide a possible answer and some level of clarity as to why voters may have taken a chance on Ventura, it does not explain *who* exactly was willing to take that chance. To

⁹¹ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 11

⁹² Graham Bensinger. 0:22

⁹³ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 13

understand that, we must explore how Ventura campaigned and who he was able to reach with his unique, anti-establishment message.

Ventura did incredibly well on election day because he brought out thousands of Minnesotans who had never bothered to vote before. One group of first-time voters Ventura really connected with were young people. Ventura's campaign recognized this early in the campaign, and leveraged Ventura's popularity with young people by reaching out to them in ways that Republican Norm Coleman and Democrat Hubert "Skip" Humphrey III would never have even considered to try. One way that they did this was through the internet.⁹⁴ Ventura's campaign utilized the internet in a way that was truly revolutionary for the time by setting up a campaign website that included things like chat rooms where voters could communicate with campaign staff, videos of campaign events, fundraising links, and, as Frank and Wagner note, "pictures of Ventura campaigning and "taking on the establishment,"" (though they do not specify what that looked like).⁹⁵ Journalists who covered the campaign at the time even took note of how effective Ventura's online campaigning efforts were. In particular, journalist Tom Hauser, who covered the Ventura campaign, wrote in his book *Inside the Ropes with Jesse Ventura*, "Ventura's campaign website is already wildly popular. A month before the election, the site was getting 50,000 hits a week; a week before the election...the number jumped to 121,000 hits."⁹⁶

This effort to appeal to young, first-time voters really paid off, as Frank and Wagner explain using data from after the election, which showed that "Of all voters, sixteen percent registered on election day...Of those, three out of four voted for Ventura," and of all the young people who voted, "forty-six percent of voters aged eighteen to twenty-nine voted for Ventura."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 26

⁹⁵ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 26

⁹⁶ Hauser, Tom. *Inside the Ropes with Jesse Ventura*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

21

⁹⁷ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 29 - 30

Though appreciating Ventura's ability to bring out young people through the use of the internet is critical to understanding his success, they were not the only Minnesotans who came out to support him.

Ventura attracted many different types of Minnesotans, not all of whom were explicitly trying to "stick it to the establishment." Nonetheless, they saw something in him that caused them to go out to cast their vote for an outsider candidate. One key group that Ventura was able to get was middle class voters. His middle class appeal was, of course, not due to his online presence. Rather, it had more to do with the type of person Ventura marketed himself as. According to Frank and Wagner, "Ventura was immediately able to connect to the middle class. He argued that he would represent the average taxpayer because he was an average taxpayer," and even though Ventura made close to two million dollars during the 1990s (setting him well outside of what some might consider the "average" tax bracket), "the middle class bought the act."⁹⁸ But regardless of how much of an "act" it was, voters liked what they saw in Jesse Ventura. As Howard Gold writes, "Post election analysis suggests that voters assessed Ventura's personal qualities and found them to be far more appealing than those of his major party opponents," adding that, "These qualities included integrity and outsider status."⁹⁹ His campaign was one of style-over-substance, centered around his rebellious personality, but it was that non-conformist personality of his that helped his campaign resonate with many of the people who voted for him. And when all was said and done, Ventura got 35% of all women voters, 40% of those who were making less than 15,000 a year, 44% of voters who had a high school diploma, 44% of self-identified liberals, 40% of moderates, and 29% of conservatives, to name just a handful of the various groups he did exceptionally well with.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 18

⁹⁹ Gold, Howard J. *Polity* 35, no. 2. 270

¹⁰⁰ Frank, Stephen I. et al. 30

What this shows us is that the message of Ventura's campaign resonated with a wide array of voters. The fact that his message resonated *at all* is noteworthy, at a time when the status quo seemed to be responsible for record economic growth, new democracies sprouting up all over the world, and the United States taking on a new kind of global power. And yet, even as all of these seemingly good things were happening, there was a feeling in the country which had been constant since at least 1992, that the political establishment was not working *for* the people anymore. This feeling, this growing anti-establishment sentiment and energy, would evolve and change with the times, but it could not be quelled by the new, neoliberal world order, because it was that order which created it. Following the campaigns of Ross Perot and the election of Governor Jesse Ventura, this anti-establishment energy has been directed toward and co-opted by new causes, new movements, and new political figures.

Part V: 2000 to 2016 - The Lead Up to The Next Anti-Establishment Candidates

In 2016, anti-establishment politics were once again bubbling beneath the mainstream in the United States. But unlike in 1992, anti-establishment candidates were trying to *infiltrate* both major political parties instead of running as third party candidates. On the left, self-described democratic socialist Bernie Sanders was attacking the establishment by saying things like, "Secretary Clinton has a number of super PACs...every candidate in the history of the world - Democrat, Republican - when they receive huge amounts of money from Wall Street, or the drug companies, or the fossil fuel industries, what they always say: not gonna impact *me*! And our question is, if it's not going to impact their decisions, why would Wall Street be spending \$15 million?"¹⁰¹

Sanders was, from the get-go, echoing the same ideas about establishment politicians that Perot and Ventura had promoted roughly 20 years prior; the establishment politicians are all

¹⁰¹ CNN, "Bernie Sanders blasts Hillary Clinton's Wall Street..." YouTube Video, 0:01, March 5, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOQU2Q2GE7k&ab_channel=CNN

bought and owned by PAC and special interest money, and in contrast, I am a free agent who is *your* servant, no one else's. Perot made this point several times during his 1992 run for the presidency, at one point exclaiming during the second presidential debate, "I'm spending my money, not PAC money, not foreign money, *my* money, to take this message to the people."¹⁰² Ventura also echoed these sentiments during a debate when he said, "November 3rd is no longer an election, it's an *auction* to the highest bidder. And that's what you have happening today in the world of politics, with the professional politicians from *both* parties."¹⁰³ Sanders was, perhaps unknowingly, building on the rhetoric of these two anti-establishment figures when he entered the race for president in 2016. But of course, Sanders was not the only politician wearing the badge of the outsider while trying to infiltrate one of the two major political parties in that election. He is not the reason I am writing this paper - his right-wing counterpart is.

Donald Trump's 2016 campaign was an all-out war on "politics as usual," the entrenched political establishment, and the neoliberal worldview and world order. Trump was drastically different from his anti-establishment predecessors and his left-wing counterpart in many important ways that will be explored, but it is also important to remember just how similar *his* message was to *their* message. For example, in an ad Trump released right before the 2016 election, he proclaimed that "our movement is about replacing a failed and corrupt political establishment with a new government controlled by you, the American people," adding that "The establishment has trillions of dollars at stake in this election."¹⁰⁴ The sentiment driving his 2016 campaign was the same sentiment Perot conveyed when he said his movement came from people who "wanted a candidate that worked and belonged to nobody but them," and it is

¹⁰² PBS Newshour, "Bush, Clinton, Perot: The second 1992 presidential debate," YouTube Video, 14:13, October 9, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eg7-QJrJZV0&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

¹⁰³ CSPAN, "Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate," CSPAN Video, 7:49, October 20, 1998, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?113541-1/minnesota-gubernatorial-debate>

¹⁰⁴ CNN, "Trump's closing ad sounds anti-Wall Street populist..." YouTube Video, 0:06, November 6, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emovoLn8Zhl&ab_channel=CNN

the same sentiment Ventura conveyed when he proclaimed that elections had become “an *auction* to the highest bidder.”

It is impossible to say how much or little Perot and Ventura’s campaigns had an impact on Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, but they certainly all sold some version of the same message, which was that “politics has become inherently corrupt, we are not politicians, therefore we are incorruptible.” But why is it that Trump could win the presidency in 2016 and Perot could not do it in 1992? To understand this, we must examine what happened to anti-establishment politics after the 1990s, and how the anti-establishment sentiment that existed diverged and responded to national crises, world events, and the growth of global neoliberal capitalism in different ways.

There are essentially three big historical moments that can help explain the development of American politics post-2000; the first event was the attack on September 11th, 2001 which, for an ever-so-brief moment, did unite the country and thus minimized the prevalence of anti-establishment sentiment. The second event was the 2003 invasion of and subsequent war in Iraq, which completely undid that unity and forced divisions within the two major parties as well as among conservatives and liberals into anti-war and pro-war camps. And lastly was the 2008 financial crisis, which marked the beginning of the Great Recession and spurred the creation of two distinct movements that were angry at the political establishment, but were coming from different political perspectives; the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. There are, of course, many other things that happened between 2000 and 2016 that all could have arguably contributed to the rise of Trump and Sanders as political stars, but 9/11, the Iraq War, and the 2008 financial crisis were all profoundly transformative moments that put the effectiveness of the neoliberal consensus into question. These moments forced compromise, rejection, and alienation within the political sphere, and they reinforced the United States’ commitment to a neoliberal world order; a world defined by people, goods, capital, and ideas being continuously

interconnected under the umbrella of liberal, democratic capitalism. The first moment of the new millennium that had the potential to undermine that order was September 11, 2001.

Because it was not foreseen by most Americans, the 9/11 attacks were very hard for them to process. 9/11 completely upset the post-Cold War idea, articulated by people like Francis Fukuyama, that the end of the Cold War signaled, “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy.”¹⁰⁵ An event as horrifying as 9/11 did not make sense within the framework of a world that was becoming more democratic, more open, more free - in short, more neoliberal. And yet, it *did* happen, and because it happened, the neoliberal federal government of the early 2000s had to respond to it. But what is notable about the United States’ response to 9/11, and why it is a touchstone moment in the history of anti-establishment politics, is the fact that this moment of sheer terror actually did quell, if but for a moment, the partisan divide within the country. The period of “rally around the flag” unity that occurred right after the attacks was hugely significant, and was exemplified by moments like when Al Gore, who had lost a hotly contested election to Bush just one year earlier, publicly praised Bush at a Democratic Party dinner, saying, “we are united behind our president, George W. Bush...And to make sure we have the strongest unity in America that we have ever had.”¹⁰⁶

This unity that came from the external threat of terrorism transformed the political landscape into one that was less concerned with domestic infighting and more concerned with preserving the country. The transformation of the political landscape also manifested itself in the passage of measures like the Patriot Act and other expansions of executive power that were framed as necessary steps in fighting the War on Terror. But within American society, it almost

¹⁰⁵ Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” in *The National Interest* No. 16. Washington, Summer 1989. 4

¹⁰⁶ Balz, Dan. “After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions,” in *The Washington Post*. Washington, September 11, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html

seemed as if, for a moment, the federal government and the American people were in near-unanimous agreement. That is not an overstatement, for as Donald Critchlow explains, shortly after the attacks “Bush outlined the nation’s retaliatory response against those who launched the attack and against global terrorism. More than three quarters of the nation saw the address. Bush’s approval rating shot up to 90 percent.”¹⁰⁷ While the unity and camaraderie that came in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was good for national morale, it was bad for anti-establishment politics. After all, a time of national healing is not a time in which one would assume people would be attracted to the idea of throwing out the establishment that is providing a calm and steady presence. But naturally, this moment did not last, and as the United States’ military response to 9/11 became larger and more wide in scope, more Americans would grow frustrated with the political establishment that was supporting measures like the Iraq War.

It is important to remember that most Americans initially supported the war in Iraq, which is not to say that there was *no* opposition, but during the initial invasion in March of 2003, according to the Pew Research Center, 72% of the country felt that using military force in Iraq was the right decision.¹⁰⁸ The main argument for invasion at that time was the now-debunked claim that the leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, and that the United States and its allies had a duty to intervene and depose Saddam before it was too late. The Bush administration and many in the federal government propagated this talking point as a justification for the invasion of Iraq, a country that did not attack us on September 11th, and when it turned out not to be true it caused many Americans, such as former U.S Army soldier J.D. Maddox, to “struggl[e] with false narratives used to

¹⁰⁷ Critchlow. 265

¹⁰⁸ “Public Attitudes toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 27, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/>.

persuade us to march into that conflict.”¹⁰⁹ As the war continued well beyond Bush’s premature declaration of victory in front of the now-infamous “mission accomplished” banner, more and more Americans began to lose faith in the war, and more importantly, in the federal government. In fact, by February of 2005, just two years into the war, the same Pew Research poll found that support for the use of military force in Iraq was tied, with 47% of respondents thinking it was the right decision, and 47% of respondents thinking it was the wrong decision.¹¹⁰

Because no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, and the democratic government that the Bush administration claimed would be able to flourish there with the ousting of Saddam never took shape, some Americans even went so far as to begin accusing the federal government of having something to do with the attacks on September 11th, which some came to believe were orchestrated by the government to *create* a reason for war in Iraq. In fact, one Pew Research survey taken at the time “reported widespread resentment toward and alienation from the national government,” in addition to finding that “nearly a third of Americans suspected that the federal government - the Bush administration - had assisted the 9/11 terrorists or had taken no action in preventing the attacks so that the United States could justify going to war in the Middle East.”¹¹¹ That survey was taken a year into Bush’s second term. Just four years earlier, as was stated previously, Bush had a 90% approval rating. If 9/11 had briefly restored Americans’ faith in the federal government, the Iraq War was the event that began to completely erode that faith, and for some it had gone beyond the erosion of faith and straight to the accusations of conspiracy. But the event that would serve as a powder keg for anti-establishment anger, and that would spur the creation of separate left wing and right wing anti-

¹⁰⁹ Maddox, J.D. “The Day I Realized I Would Never Find Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq,” in *The New York Times Magazine*. New York, January 29, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/29/magazine/iraq-weapons-mass-destruction.html>

¹¹⁰ “Public Attitudes toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 27, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/>.

¹¹¹ Critchlow. 285

establishment movements which would converge on the national political scene in 2016, was the 2008 financial crisis.

2008 was a turbulent year in American history. It was both an historic election year, and the year of one of the worst financial crises in the history of the world. Both of those events would play key roles in the creation of the Tea Party and the Occupy Wall Street movements. The financial crisis itself was, in many ways, the failure of the neoliberal world economy. As historian Adam Tooze points out, “we came as close as we have ever come in history to a total cardiac arrest, not just of the American economy, but the entire world economy.”¹¹² Because the international banking system had become more deregulated, involved more countries, and was so interconnected, when the American housing market crashed it had a ripple effect across the entire globe. The crisis exposed the flaws of unregulated, neoliberal capitalism, which were exacerbated by Wall Street greed and ineptitude. But for many Americans, the 2008 financial crisis also exposed where the political establishment’s true priorities were. It was these realizations on the part of many liberals and conservatives that spurred two distinct anti-establishment movements; the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street.

The Tea Party came into being in 2009 and was the first thoroughly anti-establishment movement to arise in response to, as historian Mike Sharpe writes, “the millions and billions and trillions spent on the 2008 bank bailout and the 2009 stimulus package.”¹¹³ The Tea Party was, however, not only angry about taxpayer money being used to bail out the big banks, but they were also angry about the possibility of taxpayer money being used to bail out struggling homeowners. Former economic advisor to President Obama, Austan Goolsbee, explained this in the documentary *Panic: The Untold Story of the 2008 Financial Crisis*, when he said, “The

¹¹² PBS Newshour, “How the 2008 financial crisis crashed the economy and changed the world,” YouTube Video, 2:28, September 13, 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXkeh8jiMdk&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

¹¹³ Sharpe, Mike. “From the Publisher: Tea Party Politics,” in *Challenge* Vol. 53, No. 3. New York, June 2010. 129

Tea Party begins with the announcement of the housing program, and they say: this is all for deadbeats and rewarding people who don't deserve it!"¹¹⁴ But beyond their anger at the political establishment for what they perceived as a gross misuse of taxpayer money, what differentiates the Tea Party from the movements that would come after it (Occupy Wall Street) and the movements that came before it (the anti-NAFTA/Perot movement, Ventura's campaign) was its pure, unadulterated hatred for Barack Obama and emphasis on race-based populism.

For the Tea Party, Obama was not simply a president whose response to the 2008 financial crisis was ineffective, he was, as Sharpe explains, a "President to fear. He is a muslim. His birth certificate was forged. He has a secret agenda. He is a socialist. He is the antichrist."¹¹⁵ Their unfiltered racism, fused with their populist anger towards what they perceived to be a corrupt Washington elite that spent their tax dollars on bailing out criminal banking institutions and wanted to spend more of it on irresponsible homeowners, created a style of anti-establishment politics that was different than anything that had existed prior to it. Yes, it was a response to the economic collapse of the housing market, but it was also a response to the election of the first black president.

By contrast, the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in 2011 was the result of growing resistance to the neoliberal world order from a left-wing populist position. As political theorist Anita Chari explains, the movement was inspired by "the popular protests of the Arab Spring," which had "[brought] new modes of protest into the political imaginary." But domestically, the movement began to gain momentum during the protests at University of Wisconsin - Madison over the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, a bill that, in Chari's words, "was an example of neoliberalization par excellence," because "it limited collective bargaining rights for state employees and made deep cuts to the state budget in the areas of health care, retirement

¹¹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, "Panic: The Untold Story of the 2008 Financial Crisis | Full VICE Special Report | HBO," YouTube Video, 1:27:30, May 1, 2019.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QozGSS7QY_U&ab_channel=CouncilonForeignRelations

¹¹⁵ Sharpe. 131

benefits, and compensation for government workers.”¹¹⁶ The online activism of the Arab Spring and the resurgence of left-wing populism present at the UW Madison protests culminated in “the leftist, anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters*” issuing this call to action: “#OCCUPY WALL STREET, Are you ready for a Tarhir moment? On Sept. 17, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street.” On that same day, “more than one thousand protesters” heard the call to action, and occupied Zuccotti Park.¹¹⁷

What Occupy Wall Street did, more so than the Tea Party movement, was put the issue of economic inequality back on the political map by directly going after who they viewed as the creators of the inequality that the United States was experiencing in 2011; the big banks and investment firms. What is noticeable about both Occupy and the Tea Party is that they both directed anger at the establishment, but, at the same time, their interpretations of how exactly to express that anger and what accountability for the establishment ought to be, looked drastically different. The Tea Party had a racialized, militant pushback against the new Democratic administration, while the Occupy Wall Street movement peacefully occupied a park in lower Manhattan and called for the big banks and investment firms to face some level of accountability for what they had done to the world economy. But putting their differences aside, what is clear about both groups is that they were upset with the status quo because it had failed them, and the status quo was defined by the inequality and instability of the neoliberal world order. Eventually all of this anger towards the establishment would climax during the 2016 election, when both the populist left and the populist right would have candidates that took their distinct messages into both major political parties.

¹¹⁶ Chari, Anita. *A Political Economy of The Senses: Neoliberalism, Reification, Critique*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2015. 200

¹¹⁷ Chari. 200

Conclusion: 2016 and Its Aftermath

Donald Trump won the 2016 election with his brand of anti-establishment politics, which was heavy on the Tea Party's brand of "own-the libs" racism, and consistent when it came to separating his campaign from "politics as usual." In the run-up to the election, many were trying to make sense of Donald Trump, and, more importantly, why he seemed to be doing so well. But of all the people that were on television and who wrote op-eds about Trump's appeal, one man's voice was not taken quite as seriously as perhaps it should have been. That man was former governor of Minnesota Jesse Ventura. By 2016, Ventura had been out of politics for over a decade and had spent his post-political life writing various books and hosting shows about conspiracy theories in which he fashioned himself a Bob Woodward-type, uncovering the horrifying "truth" about what the government was up to. But while Ventura was governor, Donald Trump actually came to Minnesota to discuss campaign strategy with him when he was debating a run for president in 2000 under the Reform Party banner. And as fate would have it, during the 2016 election Ventura's former campaign manager, Dean Barkley, remarked of Trump's campaign, "it's almost like he's reading our playbook."¹¹⁸ When one thinks about what Barkley is saying there, it does make sense. Trump was following Ventura's playbook in many ways: he constantly separated himself from establishment politicians and embraced their hatred of him, he made his campaign an all-out war on the status quo, and his interest in politics was completely self-serving.

Ventura's campaign manager was not the only member of that campaign who had something to say about Trump's presidential campaign. Ventura himself was impressed by Trump, even comparing him to Bernie Sanders in an interview on CNN: "I'm ecstatic over it

¹¹⁸ WCCO - CBS Minnesota, "That Time Donald Trump and Jesse Ventura Talked Campaign Strategy," YouTube Video, 1:03, February 14, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSQi_j5GDP4&ab_channel=WCCO-CBSMinnesota

because [Trump]'s throwing a wrench, and Bernie Sanders is throwing a wrench in the Democratic Party...it's time now for the people to rise up and let them know: we are still the boss, not the two political parties."¹¹⁹

What 2016 represented was the moment when a version of Jesse Ventura's message and style of politics rallied a large portion of the national electorate, but without the disillusion caused by 9/11 and the Iraq war, and without rising inequality that continues to be exacerbated by the neoliberal economic order, that message would most likely never have resonated with so many Americans. In many ways, the election of Donald Trump vindicates those like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who argued that "Economic conflict is essential if freedom is to be preserved, because it is the only barrier against class domination; yet economic conflict, pursued to excess, may well destroy the underlying fabric of common principle which sustains free society."¹²⁰ It is not my place to say whether the economic conflict that was a result of the neoliberalization of the world economy will or has destroyed our free society, but if anything a New Deal Democrat said in 1949 has relevance now, it is that.

¹¹⁹ CNN, "Jesse Ventura on Donald Trump: 'I love it,'" YouTube Video, 0:01, August 18, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH_Tvf4ZyX0&ab_channel=CNN

¹²⁰ Schlesinger. 173

Bibliography:

American Experience: Eyes on the Prize, season 2, episode 3, "Power! 1966-68," Directed by Terry Kay Rockefeller and Louis Massah, aired 2006, on Public Broadcasting Service. (PBS, 2006).

Balz, Dan. "After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions," in *The Washington Post*. Washington, September 11, 2021.

Bell, Daniel. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York, Basic Books, 1976.

Bloom, Alexander and Wini Breines. *Takin' It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015.

CBS News, "2015 Republican debate: Jeb Bush pushes against Donald Trump on political money," YouTube video, September 16, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-7V_qSkdSw.

CGTN America, "Jesse Ventura discusses third party candidates in the US presidential elections," YouTube Video, October 13, 2015.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fBA4aQk96k&ab_channel=CGTNAmerica

Chari, Anita. *A Political Economy of The Senses: Neoliberalism, Reification, Critique*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2015

CNN, "Bernie Sanders blasts Hillary Clinton's Wall Street..." YouTube Video, 0:01, March 5, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOQU2Q2GE7k&ab_channel=CNN

CNN, "Jesse Ventura on Donald Trump: 'I love it,'" YouTube Video, 0:01, August 18, 2015.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH_Tvf4ZyX0&ab_channel=CNN

CNN, "Ronald Reagan's son on what his dad would think of current GOP," YouTube Video, 0:17, February 6, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zoi0Fhlc8pk&ab_channel=CNN.

CNN, "Ross Perot battles Al Gore in 1993 NAFTA debate," YouTube Video, 4:11, September 2, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fi8OOAKuGQ&t=318s&ab_channel=CNN

CNN, "Trump's closing ad sounds anti-Wall Street populist..." YouTube Video, 0:06, November 6, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emovoLn8Zhl&ab_channel=CNN

Council on Foreign Relations, "Panic: The Untold Story of the 2008 Financial Crisis | Full VICE Special Report | HBO," YouTube Video, May 1, 2019.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QozGSS7QY_U&ab_channel=CouncilonForeignRelations

Cowie, Jefferson. *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017

CSPAN, "Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate," CSPAN Video, October 20, 1998, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?113541-1/minnesota-gubernatorial-debate>

Critchlow, Donald T. *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 2011.

- Davis, Gerald F. *The Vanishing American Corporation*. Oakland, Brett-Koehler Publishers, 2016
- Delton, Jennifer. *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Fein, Kim Philips. *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against The New Deal*. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.
- Frank, Stephen I. et al. *We Shocked the World: A Case Study of Jesse Ventura's Election as Governor of Minnesota*. San Diego, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" in *The National Interest* No. 16. Washington, Summer 1989.
- Gerstle, Gary. "America's Neoliberal Order," in *Beyond the New Deal Order: U.S. Politics From the Great Depression to the Great Recession*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2019
- Gerstle, Gary. "The Reach and Limits of the Liberal Consensus," in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Random House, New York, 1987
- Gold, Howard J. "Third-Party Voting in Gubernatorial Elections: A Study of Angus King of Maine and Jesse Ventura of Minnesota." *Polity* 35, no. 2. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002. 265–82.
- Gold, Howard J. "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace," in *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1995.
- Graham Bensinger, "Jesse Ventura: I could win the presidential election," YouTube Video, December 23, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ2es2vAnDQ&ab_channel=GrahamBensinger
- Harvey, David. "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 610. Sage Publications, London, 2007.
- Hauser, Tom. *Inside the Ropes with Jesse Ventura*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Hayek, Friedrich. "Why I Am Not a Conservative," in *The Constitution of Liberty*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011. https://press.uchicago.edu/books/excerpt/2011/hayek_constitution.html
- Hochberg, Fred P. *Trade is Not a Four Letter Word*. New York, Avid Reader Press, 2020.
- Jesse Ventura. National Governors Association. Accessed March 6, 2022. <https://www.nga.org/governor/jesse-ventura/>
- MacArthur, John R. *The Selling of "Free Trade": NAFTA, Washington, and the Subversion of American Democracy*. New York, Hill and Wang, 2000.
- Maddox, J.D. "The Day I Realized I Would Never Find Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq," in *The New York Times Magazine*. New York, January 29, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/29/magazine/iraq-weapons-mass-destruction.html>
- Oliver, Eric J. et al. "Rise of the "Trumpenvolk": Populism in the 2016 Election," in *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 667. London, Sage Publications, September 2016.

O'Mara, Margaret. *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*, New York, Penguin Press, 2019

PBS Newshour, "Bush, Clinton, and Perot: The first 1992 presidential debate," YouTube Video, September 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWo88Lr0rzw&t=276s>.

PBS Newshour, "Bush, Clinton, Perot: The second 1992 presidential debate," YouTube Video, October 9, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eg7-QJrJZV0&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

PBS Newshour, "How the 2008 financial crisis crashed the economy and changed the world," YouTube Video, 2:28, September 13, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXkeh8jiMdk&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

"Public Attitudes toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 27, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/>.

"Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy. Pew Research Center, May 28, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/05/17/public-trust-in-government-1958-2021/>.

Rappoport, Ronald B. et al. *Three's a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and the Republican Resurgence*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2007

Rosenstone, Steven J. et al. *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure - Updated and Expanded Second Edition*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

Rossinow, Doug. *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015

Samuel Wilson, "Ross Perot 1992 - How to Build a Business and Create Jobs," YouTube Video, 1:02, March 9, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75aNW3vrLPs&ab_channel=SamuelWilson

Saturday Night Live, "Ross Perot Cold Open: Fighting the Deficit - Saturday Night Live," YouTube Video, October 4, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_RtNzJyAJk&ab_channel=SaturdayNightLive

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur M. *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*. Boston, Da Capo Press, 1949.

Schulte-Sasse, Linda. "Meet Ross Perot: The Lasting Legacy of Capraesque Populism," in *Cultural Critique No. 25 (Autumn, 1993)*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993

Schwartz, Jon. "Showtime documentary proves Trump is the 21st century Reagan," in *The Intercept*. January 4th, 2021. <https://theintercept.com/2021/01/04/trump-reagan-showtime-documentary/>

Sharpe, Mike. "From the Publisher: Tea Party Politics," in *Challenge* Vol. 53, No. 3. New York, June 2010.

Steve Henley, "Yippie Versus Yuppie," YouTube Video, February 3rd, 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOFBAJ8BIJs&ab_channel=SteveHenley

Washington Post. "Wharton is a 'great school.' Just ask Trump," YouTube Video, July 9 2019.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39Osnpa0IA&ab_channel=WashingtonPost

WCCO - CBS Minnesota, "That Time Donald Trump and Jesse Ventura Talked Campaign Strategy," YouTube Video, 1:03, February 14, 2016.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSQi_j5GDP4&ab_channel=WCCO-CBSMinnesota

Zelizer, Julian. "Ross Perot, who lost an election and transformed the world," on *CNN.com*. July 9, 2019.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/09/opinions/how-ross-perot-shaped-our-world-zelizer/index.html>

