

The Origins of SDS's Ultra-Jeffersonian New Left Ideal of Democracy

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This is the sixth of my series of essays on the relationships between the early American New Left and the American tradition of democracy. It deals with the ultra-Jeffersonian origins of SDS's ultra-Jeffersonian democratic ideal, which had lasted in the American tradition of ideal democracy. This essay consists of five parts. The first part starts with Jefferson's ideal of participatory democracy seen as a practicable ideal rather than as an impracticable utopia because it was qualified in the sense of its emphasis on direct democracy in small community without rejection of representative democracy in larger society. This was Jefferson's decentralized graduation of republics with his stress on the elementary republics of ward in which people directly participate in deciding the direction of their community life on a day-to-day basis. Before the first part ends, the rural and agricultural way of life as the essential condition for the successful operation of Jeffersonian participation democracy has been examined.

*The second part of this essay concerns with the fact that ideal of Jeffersonian participatory democracy became less and less relevant to the development of American democratic tradition. It focuses on reviewing Allen Smith's *The Spirit of American Government* whose description of the anti-Jeffersonian tradition of anti-local democracy in America (the dominance of federal government over state government and that of state government over municipal government) seemed to be right, but whose contention of anti-Jeffersonian conspiracy (the deliberate suppression of democracy by the minority propertied class for maintaining their*

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private interests at the sacrifice of the public interest of majority property-less people) explaining the victory of anti- Jeffersonian extenders of central government appeared to be wrong.

The third part of this essay treats the petty- Jeffersonian tradition of qualified participatory democracy in practice. By petty-Jeffersonian tradition I mean the rarity of practicing Jefferson's ideal of Aualified participatory democracy in the history of American democracy. That is to say, only two exceptions to non/anti-Jeffersonian tradition of democracy can be found in that history to be a practice of Jeffersonian ideal of participatory democracy on a small scale: (1) the Populist-Progressive reform in the from of direct democracy (the direct primary, the initiative and referendum, etc.) whose purpose was to make the public will of the majority supreme over the privatepower of the minority; and (2) the town meeting of the New England states. And the fourth part of this essay deals with the ultra-Jeffersonian tradition of unlimited participatory democracy in conception, which has been prevalent mainly in the American intellectual world. The ultra- Jeffersonian conceptions of democracy which I discuss in that part include the arguments for small community of various kinds as the best unit of democratic participation, the advocacy of unlimited and comprehensive participatory democracy by libertarians who turned participatory democracy into absolute democracy, and the well-known Lincoln formula: "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

From the ultra-Jeffersonian tradition of unlimited participatory democracy in conception, which lead finally to the New Left conception of unqualified participatory democracy, the last part of this essay turns to SDS's own ultra-Jeffersonian New Left ideal of unqualified participatory democracy mainly stated in its founding document, the "Port Huron Statement." That ideal expressed. I emphasize, both SDS's protest against what it had discovered to be the "hypocrisy" of the literally Jeffersonian-Lincolnian ideal of American democracy, to which it was committed, and its search for a truly alternative to falsely Jeffersonian reality of American democracy. SDS's ultra-Jeffersonian New Left ideal of democracy is analyzed in terms of its definition of "human being, human relationships, and social ststems," the first two being concerned with its ideal end of democracy and the last with its ideal means of it. The emphasis of the analysis is on the social system which SDS called" a democracy of individual participation," which could be unlimitedly used in every sphere of human life. So SDS's participatory democracy is seen as an ultra-Jeffersonian unqualified participatory democracy whose aim was to replace representative democracy in respect of making decision, enforcing decision, and adjudicating disputes in all kinds of small communities.

I . JEFFERSON' S IDEAL OF QUALIFIED PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

1. Jefferson' s Primary and Principal Form of Participatory Democracy

For Jefferson, in short, ideal democracy as a means meant to be participatory democracy. As mentioned in my essay, “Jeffersoian/Ultra-Jeffersonian Sources of SDS’s Initial Activism,” political participation, for Jefferson, seemed to be the only democratic instrument to protect equal human rights, and it had two different forms: the usual, institutional participation regularly used by the majority of the people in the normal time of democracy and the unusual, non-institutional or even anti-institutional participation irregularly used by the disaffected minorities in the abnormal time of democracy. (Kuo, 1990: 16-24) All of what has been said so far, in my series of essays on the relationship between the early American Now Left and the American tradition of democracy, about Jeffersonian participatory democracy is concerned almost solely with its second form. For Jefferson, needless to sat, it was secondary and supplementary, not primary and principal. From now on, what will be dealt with as the Jeffersonian participatory democracy is concerned exclusively with its primary and principal form – its first form.

To treat Jeffersonian participatory democracy as an ideal of democracy, we must keep it in mind that Jefferson' s idealism about democracy was practicable idealism rather than impracticable utopianism, and that participatory democracy, for Jefferson himself, was qualified rather than unqualified. As a matter of fact, Jefferson dis not call democracy by its own name, but by the name of “republic.” Once of my main point about Jefferson' s usual, institutional, participatory democracy is his decentralized graduation of republics. First of all, let us see Jefferson' s definition of republic.

2.Jefferson’s Combination of the Pure and the Practicable Republics into a Graduation of Republics.

In one of his letters to John Taylor, Jefferson acknowledged that “the term republic is of very vague application in every language.”¹ But he wished to define it clearly. He defined the pure form of an ideal republic as “a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules established by the majority.”² “Such a government,” he admitted, “is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population.” And he would “doubt if if would be practical beyond the extent of a New England township.”³ The first shade from this pure element,” he

1. Jefferson’s letter to John Taylor, 28 May 1816, in Koch and Peden, 1944:669.

2. Ibid., 670.

3. Ibid.

indicated, “would be where the powers of the government, being divided, should be exercised each by representatives chosen either pro hac vice, or for such terms as should render secure the duty of expressing the will of their constituents”. This he considered as “the nearest approach to a pure republic, which is practicable on a large scale of country or population.”⁴ Jefferson thus made a distinction between the pure form of a republic in “narrow limits of space and population,” both of which, I shall contend, were his instruments of democracy.

This has also been the distinction conventionally made between direct democracy and representative democracy. Why has this distinction been conventionally made? Ralph Baston Perry has given us the right answer: “A confidence in the intellectual and moral capacity of the people tends to direct democracy; while a less flattering view of the generality of mankind tends to an indirect democracy in which the masses are protected against their own weakness by the delegation of power to their more eminent representative.” (Perry, 1944:118) Perry did not, however, consider direct democracy and indirect democracy to be exclusive. On the contrary, he regarded “these two variants” as being “interdependent.” (Perry, 1944: 118) At any rate, in the view of Perry, “democracy is capable of degress.” He, therefore, concluded: “The people, however defined, may govern directly; or indirectly through elected representatives; or both directly and indirectly.” (Perry, 1944: 118) It is my argument that Jefferson as a pragmatist idealist created a practicably ideal instrument of democracy, which consist of the elements of both direct and representative democracies. In the following pages I examine why and how Jefferson combined these two different element of democracy into a practicably ideal means of democracy.

Jefferson claimed that he belonged to the type of men “who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not the most wise depository of the public interest.”⁵ Having deep trust in the honesty and good sense of the people, Jefferson not only wrote in private that “I have no fear... that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master,”⁶ but also declared in public the natural right of every man to self-government: “Every man, and every body of men on earth, possess the right of self-government. They receive it with their being from the hand of nature.”⁷ Every man cannot, of course, govern himself in all things. Jefferson was aware of this. What he meant to be self-government was “that the people, being the only safe

4. Ibid.

5. Jefferson’s letter to Henry Lee, 10 August 1824, in Koch and Peden, 1944:715.

6. Jefferson’s letter to Hartley, 1787, in Padover, ed., 1939:36.

7. Jefferson’s opinion whether the seat of government shall be transferred to the Potomac, July 15, 1790. Ibid., 24.

depository of power, should exercise in person every function which their qualification enable them to exercise, consistently with the order and security of society.”⁸

What did Jefferson think the people are qualified and disqualified to do with regard to governance? He answered this question as follows:

*We think in America that it is necessary to introduce the people into every department of government as far as they are capable of exercising it; and that this is the only way to ensure a long continued and honest administration of its powers. 1. They are not qualified to exercise themselves the Executive department; but they are qualified to name the person who shall exercise it…… 2. They are not qualified to legislate. With us, therefore, they only choose the legislators. 3. They are not qualified to judge questions of law, but they are very capable of judging question of fact. In the form of juries, therefore, they determine all matters of fact, leaving to the permanent judges to decide the law resulting from these facts…… It is best to have the people in all three departments where that is possible.*⁹

Jefferson thought that “experience has proved it safer, for the mass of individuals composing the society, to reserve to themselves personally the exercise of all rightful powers to which they are competent, and to delegate those to which they are not competent to deputies names, and removable for unfaithful conduct, by themselves immediately.” From this experience Jefferson came to the following conclusion:

*Hence…… the people (by which is meant the mass of individuals composing the society) being competent to judge of the facts occurring in ordinary life, they have retained the functions of judges of facts, under the name of jurors; but being unqualified for the management of affairs requiring intelligence above the common level, yet competent judges of human character, they chose, for their management, representatives, some by themselves immediately, others by electors chosen by themselves.*¹⁰

Thus, in general, Jefferson limited the use of the term republic to the familiar representative type: “A government is republic in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns (not indeed in person, which would be impracticable beyond the limits of a city, or small township, but) by

8. Jefferson’s letter to Dr. Walter Jones, 2 January 1814, in Ford, ed. 1899:477.

9. Jefferson’s letter to the Abbe Francise Arnaud, 19 July 1789, in Ford, ed. 1895:103-104.

10. Jefferson’s letter to Dupont de Nemours, 24 April 1816, in Padover, ed., 1939:55-56

representatives chosen by himself, and responsible to him at short periods.”¹¹ Charles M. Wiltse saw this practicable republic as being Jefferson’s “ideal form of government which is ideally best.” For he thought that Jefferson considered the representative principle to be “sufficiently elastic to respond to whatever demands may be made upon it.” (Wiltse, 1960:80-81) But, in the view of Walter E. Volkomer, Jefferson’s “ideal form of government” was the pure republic like “the New England town meeting, in which the power of government remained in the hands of the people and no delegation of authority was required.” (Volkomer, 1969:70) Both Wiltse and Volkomer were right in their descriptions of respective elements of Jefferson’s ideal form of republican government. But both descriptions were incomplete, as far as Jefferson’s ideal form of republic as a whole was concerned, if both stopped just there. In fact, both did not.

Volkomer immediately supplemented the following statement to the above one: “Jefferson recognized, however, that direct democracy was impossible except in very small territorial units, and he acknowledged the necessity of a representative system of government beyond the town level.” (Volkomer, 1969:70) Despite this supplement, Volkomer’s emphasis was still on the other part of Jefferson’s ideal form of republican government. He lost no time in adding the following:

But representation required methods for controlling the propensity of officials to abuse their trust, and Jefferson proposed a number of devices to achieve this end. Short terms of office would both keep government responsive to the majority and permit the rapid removal from office of men who misused their authority. The localism present in Jefferson’s thought is understandable in large measure by his fear of delegated power. His plan for the creation of local ward was designed to keep government close to the people so that they would best be able to scrutinize the affairs of their agents. (Jefferson’s localism had a moral purpose as well. Men who conducted their own public affairs would be both better citizens and more virtuous individuals; and local government provides more opportunity for direct participation than does government at a higher and more distant level.)” (Volkomer, 1969:70)

As for Wiltse, he made supplement, too, though not immediately. He pointed out the danger of representative democracy: “The larger the state, the more remote is the individual from the actual governing power; and there is consequently increasing danger that he will come to regard himself as impotent so far as the affairs of the

10. Jefferson’s letter. to Samued Kercheval, July 1816, in Ford, ed, 1905:4-5

nation are concerned, and lost interest in them.” (Wiltse, 1960:205) “This danger,” he emphasized, however, “Jefferson proposes to avoid by organizing the state into an hierarchy of self-governing units” as follows:

The centralized federal republic is subdivided into state, each with its own executive, legislative and judiciary organs [just like those of the federal republic]; the state is made up of counties, with their own courts and administrative machinery; and the county itself is reduced to wards or townships, of an area of some five or six square miles. In the wards, each citizen is an acting member of the government, meeting in common council to carry on the business of the community. Thus each man has a personal interest in the actual conduct of affairs, either in his own ward or in one of the higher units of the scale; and at the same time, the more minute details of administration, such as local roads and schools, and placed directly under the supervision of those most concerned. (Wiltse, 1960:205-6)

What Wiltse called “hierarchy of self-governing units” was Jefferson’s complex networks of republics. The latter combined the pure and the practicable republics into a “graduation” of republics consisting of “1, the general federal republic, for all concerns of foreign and federal; 2, that of the state, for what relates to our own citizens exclusively; 3, the county republics, for the duties and concerns of the county; and 4, the ward republics, for the small and yet numerous and interesting concerns of the neighborhood.”¹²

The elementary republics of the wards, the county republics, the state republics, and the republic of the Union, [Jefferson hoped] would form a graduation of authorities, standing each on the basis of law, holding every one its delegated share of powers, and constituting truly a system of fundamental balances and checks for the government.¹³

3. Jefferson’s Decentralization of Republic as the Ideal Instrument of American Democracy

The graduation of republics was Jefferson’s creation of an ideal instrument of American democracy. Why did he create such a creation? He did it because, for him, “the way to have good and safe government, is not to trust it all to one, but to divide it

12 Jefferson’s letter to Samuel Kercheval, 12 July 1816, in Ford, ed., 1905:9.

13 Jefferson’s letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816, in Koch and Peden, ed., 1944:661.

among the many, distribution to every one exactly the functions he is competent to.”¹⁴
How, then, did he create it? The following is his own answer:

*Let the national government be entrusted with the defense of the nation, and its foreign and federal relations; the state government with civil rights, law, police, and administration of what concerns the State generally; the counties with the local concerns of the counties, and each ward direct the interests within itself. It is by dividing and subdividing these republic from the great national one down through all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best.*¹⁵

In concluding the “it is not by the consolidation, or concentration of powers, but by their distribution, that good government is effected,” Jefferson repeated his emphasis on decentralization as the ideal instrument of American democracy:

*Were not his great country already divided into States, that division must be made, that each might do for itself what concerns itself directly, and what it can so much better do than a distant authority. Every State again is divided into counties, each to take care of what lies within its local bounds; each county again into townships or wards, to be governed each by its individual proprietor……. It is by this partition of cares, descending in graduation from general to particular, that the mass of human affairs may be best managed, for the good and prosperity of all.*¹⁶

“Jefferson’s insistence on decentralization,” according to Caleb Perry Patterson, was an attempt to prevent bureaucracy from forming because “without centralization there is no need for bureaucracy.” (Patterson, 1953:108, 111) In Patterson’s opinion, Jefferson regarded centralization of governmental powers not merely as “the road to irresponsible, corrupt, and expensive bureaucratic government” but also as “the greatest danger to liberty.” (Patterson, 1953:107, 111) “If power could be deposited in a multiplicity of units of government,” Patterson believed, “there would not only be self-government, the natural right of man, but no centralization and, therefore, no bureaucracy,” all as Jefferson wished. (Patterson, 1953:109) In these senses, decentralization can be seen as Jefferson’s ideal instrument of democracy.

But, we should ask, what was decentralization designed for? Jefferson’s answer

14 Ibid., 660.

15 Ibid.

16 Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, in Koch and Peden, eds., 1944:84-85.

was that it was designed for people's direct and everyday participation. Since Jefferson believed that "every government degenerates when trust to the rulers of the people alone," asserted that "the people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories," and insisted that "the influence over government must be shared among all the people." (Quoted, Dewey, 1940:42) it is safe to say that this belief, assertion and insistence led him, as Adam Penleton Grimes emphasized, "to place local government first, state government next, and the national government last in terms of scope powers which should be granted to them." (Grimes, 1955:158) Grimes was certainly right when he stressed that Jefferson sought "to make more democratic the offices of local self-government." (Grimes, 1955:158) Among the offices of local self-government the most basic was "wards" characterized by Jefferson as the "most fundamental measure for securing good government, and for instilling the principles and exercise of self-government into every fiber of every member of our commonwealth."¹⁷ In this sense, the elementary republic of wards in Jefferson's graduation of republics is worth our additional attention.

4.The Elementary Republic of Wards as Jefferson's Main Emphasis in His Graduation of Republics

The elementary republics of wards is worth our special attention because it was, as Patterson indicated, Jefferson's main emphasis in his attempt to prevent centralization and to provide citizens with opportunities of self-government in their immediate affairs. (Patterson, 1953:108) Furthermore, John Dewey also regarded Jefferson's plan to divide every county into wards as the essential, or even the central, part of the latter's political philosophy. According to Dewey, Jefferson was impressed practically as well as theoretically, with the effectiveness of the New England town meeting, and wished to see something of the sort made an organic part of the governing process of the whole country. (Dewey, 1940:21) Division of every county into wards was first suggested by Jefferson in connection with organization of an elementary school system, (Dewey, 1940:21) but his aim was much more than that. In Dewey's opinion, although the plan was not adopted, it was "an essential part of Jefferson's political philosophy," (Dewey, 1940:22) To Dewey, "the heart of Jefferson's philosophy of politics" was found in the latter's effort to institute small administrative and legislative units as "the keystone of the arch." (Dewey, 1940:23).

Jefferson's "wards" can serve at once the double purposes of giving to every citizen a direct share in the conduct of his government, and of performing efficiently

17 Jefferson's letter to Cabell, 17 June 1814, in The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, vol.14, Memorial Edition (Washington: 1903-1904):83-84.

the more minute, and consequently more important, administrative functions. In his letter to Samuel Kercheval, Jefferson wrote:

*Divide the counties into ward of such size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person. Ascribe to them the government of their ward in all things relating to themselves exclusively. A justice, chosen by themselves, in each, a constable, a military company, a patrol, a school, the care of their own poor, their own portion of the public roads, the choice of one or more jurors to serve in some court, and the delivery, within their own wards, of their own votes for all elective officers of higher sphere, will relieve the county administration of nearly all of its business, will have it better done, and by making every citizen an acting member of the government, and in the offices nearest and most interesting to him, will attach him by his strongest feelings to the independence of his country, and its republican constitution. The justices thus chosen by every ward, would constitute the county court, would do its judiciary business, direct roads and bridges, levy country at poor rates, and administer all the matters of common interest to the whole country. These wards, called townships in New England, are the principle of their governments, and have proven themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation.*¹⁸

The aim of Jefferson's plan to divide every county into wards was to make the wards "little republics, with a warden at the head of each, for all those concerns, which being under their eye, they would better manage than the larger republics of the county or state." (Quoted, Dewey, 1940:22) They are to have the "care of the poor, roads, police, elections, nomination of jurors, administration of justice in small cases, elementary exercises of militia." 9 (Quoted, Dewey, 1940:22) In short, they are to exercise directly with respect to their own affairs all the functions of government, civil and military. In addition, all wards would be called into meeting on the same day, so that the collective sense of the whole people would be produced. (Dewey, 1940:22) "In the words, if nowhere else," Wiltse anticipated, "will the individual achieve a sense of oneness with the whole, a sense of individuality, too, in that he has his part to play the drama, and with it a measure of self-realization." (Wiltse, 1960:132) In the wards, Jefferson himself emphasized, "every man is a sharer in the direction of his ward-republic..... and feels that he is a participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year, but every day."¹⁹

18 Jefferson's letter to Samuel Kercheval, 12 July 1816, in Ford, The Works of Thomas Jefferson. 8-9.

19 Jefferson's letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816, in Koch and Peden, eds., 1944:661.

The Jeffersonian participation in its usual form was not merely a right, but also a duty of every citizen. This was the point on which Wiltse put emphasis:

The duty of the individual citizen..... extends much further than the mere election of representatives to carry on in his name the actual business of government. He must keep informed, through the press, books, the schools, on the issues of the day, the problems facing his representatives, the laws passed and their import. And he must exercise in person every function his qualifications will permit him to exercise. Government is equally the concern of all the men associated under it..... Every man is a potential ruler and should be always ready to assume public office if his fellow citizens place that trust at his disposal; and every man, in office or in private life, should do his part in formulating the will of the group. Good government springs from a common interest in public affairs. (Wiltse, 1960:205).

5. The Essential Conditions for the Successful Operation of the Jeffersonian Participatory Democracy

The elementary republic of wards proposed by Jefferson for direct and everyday participation on the part of the ordinary citizen is, of course, an ideal instrument of democracy. But its successful operation requires essential conditions. Carl Becker stated these conditions as follows:

Jefferson's ideal of democratic society and republican government could best be realized in a small agricultural community, such as he was familiar with at Monticello, composed of a few men of substance and learning like himself and his friend James Madison and otherwise chiefly of industrious, upstanding yeoman farmers; making altogether a community of good neighbors, in which everyone knew who was who, and what was being done and who was doing it. The affairs of such a community, being easily within the "reach and competence" of the people, could be managed by them with the minimum of officials, exercising the minimum of palaver and ceremonial display. (Becker, 1967:50)

According to Harry M. Clor what Jefferson himself highly praised as the essential condition for successful operation of participatory democracy as an ideal form of democracy was indeed the rural and agricultural (as distinguished from the urban and commercial) way of life which, Jefferson thought, could contribute greatly

to virtuous and orderly life, both public and private, in a participatory democracy:

Jefferson's writings contain numerous references to the significance of "virtue," "manners" and "morals" for the health of republic society..... Jefferson placed high value on the rural and agricultural (as distinguished from the urban and commercial) way of life because it tends to develop personal self-reliance and self-discipline, as well as "quiet life, and order conduct, both public and private." He also regarded private property as conducive to a moderate and orderly life, particularly when the property has been acquired by one's own independent labors.

In Jefferson's view self-reliance, self-control, and moderation in one's desires are personal virtues requisite for political self-government. They contribute to harmony and mutual esteem among citizens. They are necessary foundation of public spiritedness — a willingness and capacity to devote one's energies to the larger concerns of the commonwealth. Jefferson thought that populous cities and the life of commerce nurture a multitude of selfish passions, and produce the kind of man who is more interested in manipulating others than in cooperating with them. But "virtue" (combined with property honorably acquired) renders men reasonable, equips them for the duties of citizenship and makes them "interested in the support of law and order."

Whatever may now be thought of the agrarian and anti-urban components of Jeffersonian philosophy, it is an important fact that, in Jeffersonian philosophy, moral character and republican freedom are held to be profoundly connected. Jefferson is not one of those who regard the moral life as wholly a matter of personal preference, having no relation to the interests of the community. His commitment to individual liberty in the pursuit of happiness is well known. But, evidently, he declined to identify the pursuit of happiness, public or private, simply with the pursuit of any values or objects whatever that any individuals may happen to choose. Jefferson held that there are better and worse pursuits, and that the distinction has import for the public welfare. (Clor, 1969:93-98)

The small agricultural community was Jefferson's solution to the problem of large democracy such as that in the United States. As Grant McConnell point out:

The United States was the first of the modern democracies, for a long time the largest, and the first to launch the experiment of federalism. Almost from the beginning of American national history, the ablest political leaders realized that

a commitment to liberty and equality implied a social structure free of the feudal orders of Europe and that this in turn posed a general problem of the political ordering of unprecedented numbers of people. For Jefferson..... the solution lay in the agrarian democracy of small farming communities.” (McConnell, 1966:102)

Why did Jefferson advocate agrarian democracy? For him, one reason was his belief in the natural virtue of farmers: “Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God..... whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”²⁰ Another was his faith in the advantages of the small rural community. McConnell has analyzed the assumed advantages of the Jeffersonian “ideology of the small community” as follows.²¹

The roots of this ideology reach into the nation’s agrarian past. They have produced the association so frequently made between individual virtue and the simplicity of rural life. This and other assumptions which have seemed to grow out of the particular conditions of American life have formed a conception of the small geographical community as the repository of social virtue.

The first of these assumptions is that the small community is natural. For most of human history most men have lived in such communities. In the scale of history large cities are deviations from the normal. By comparison with the life of cities, life in the small rural community is in accord with man’s own nature. In the rural community man is close to the elemental aspects of existence..... Moreover, the rural community develops without human planning and is the result of an organic growth. In it needs for cooperation develop spontaneously among people living in a common way of life. Those needs are visible and comprehensible to all, so that there is no necessity for compulsion to meet them; thus if a member of the small community requires help, it must be given, not because some law or ruler commands, but because it is plain that at some later time similar need may strike those now being called to help.....

The second assumption is that the interests of the people of a small community will be identical. It is immediately obvious that in almost any small town there is less diversity of people than in a large city. There are fewer families, and these are frequently interrelated; there are fewer economic interests, and often lesser extremes of wealth and poverty; there are fewer religions and races. The same will generally be true of almost any dimension of

20 Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, Query XIX, in Koch and Peden, eds., 1944:280.

21 It should be noted that McConnell himself was an opponent to the Jeffersonian ideology of small community.

social difference. This greater homogeneity is directly observable in most small communities and is repeatedly reflected in their cohesive behavior and their frequent mistrust of strangers.

These two assumptions are bolstered by several arguments which tend to be made wherever the merits of small communities have been praised. One of the most common is that the members of a small community know much more about their own problems than outsiders do. The particular lay of the land, its history in detail, the intangibles of personal relationships—these are matters, often of essential importance, which in the nature of things can be known only to local people. In choosing public officials, the people of a small community thus have a great advantage when they are acting in a local election, where, in contrast with their situation in a national election, they can know the candidates by direct human contact. Quite possibly they not only know the candidates personally, but are familiar with their business records, credits, personal habits, and family histories as well. Similarly, the officials of a small community will know their community and their constituents—their histories, weaknesses, strengths, and needs. In such a setting discussion on the basis of accurate and detailed information is possible as it is not in a large community.

An even greater advantage is perceived in the deliberations of a small community. From Aristotle onward it has been argued that only in a rather small groups is it possible to have any rational discussion, the classic point being that unless the various speakers' arguments could be heard there could be no rational evaluation and that, accordingly, the range of a human voice limited the size of an effective deliberating body. Moreover, modern experience and study of crowd behavior have demonstrated the tendencies of any large group to irrationality, even when mechanical devices extend the reach of the human voice.

This emphasis upon rational discussion has been particularly strong in America, where the New England town meeting and the Quaker meeting have been cited endlessly as embodiments of democracy..... The persuasiveness of the town meeting ideal, even where its realization is only formal, is so great that the ideal plainly touches something very close to the heart of the dominant ideology. (McConnel, 1966, pp.93-96)

II .THE ANTI-JEFFERSONIAN TRADITION OF ANTI-LOCAL DEMOCRACY?

1.The Original Cause of the Anti-Jeffersonian Tradition of Anti-Local

Democracy: Smith's Theory of Conspiracy for the Making of the American Constitution

“Over the years of national development” in America, as McConnell pointed out, “Jefferson’s picture of the proper course had less and less relevance.” (McConnell, 1966:72) What McConnell referred to as Jefferson’s “picture of the proper course” was the latter’s “ideology of small community” which he interpreted above, or what I have called Jefferson’s ideal of qualified participatory democracy above. Indeed, with the exception of the democratic practice in the six states of New England and the democratic ideal involved in the populist and progressive movements, both of which will be dealt with below in this essay, the American tradition of democracy has been characterized by something else which we shall see in the next two essays.

Why the ideal of Jeffersonian participatory democracy had become less and less relevant to the development of American democratic tradition? James Allen Smith provided us with a theory of conspiracy, which accounted for the original cause of the anti-Jefferson tradition of anti-local democracy, in his The Spirit of American Government, published in 1907:

The sweeping changes made in our form of government after the Declaration of Independence were clearly revolutionary in character. The English system of checks and balances was discarded for the more democratic one under which all the important powers of government were vested in the legislature……

It is the general belief…… that the Constitution of the United States is the very embodiment of democratic philosophy. The people take it for granted that the framers of that document were imbued with the spirit of political equality and sought to establish a government by the people themselves. Widely as this view is entertained, it is, however, at variance with the facts.

“Scarcely any of these men [the framers of the Constitution] entertained” …… “what we should now call extreme democratic views. Scarcely any, perhaps, had that intense faith in the ultimate good sense of the people which was the most powerful characteristic of Jefferson.”

Democracy—government by the people, or directly responsible to them—was not the object which the framers of the American Constitution had in view, but the very thing which they wished to avoid……

The evidence is overwhelming that the men who sat in that convention [Philadelphia Convention] had no faith in the wisdom or political capacity of the people. Their aim and purpose was not to secure a larger measure of

democracy, but to eliminate as far as possible the direct influence of the people on the legislation and public policy.....They represented, however, the wealthy and conservative classes, and had for the most part but little sympathy with the popular theory of government.....

The long list of distinguished men who took part in the deliberations of that body is noteworthy, however, for the absence of such names as Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry and other democratic leaders of that time. The Federal Convention assembled in Philadelphia only eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, yet only six of the fifty-six men who signed that document were among its members. Conservatism and thorough distrust of popular government characterized throughout the proceedings of that convention.....

The Convention desired to establish not only a strong and vigorous central government, but one which would at the same time possess great stability or freedom from change..... This desired stability the government under the Confederation did not possess, since it was, in the opinion of the members of the Convention, dangerously responsive to public opinion; hence their desire to supplant it with an elaborate system of constitutional checks. The adoption of this system was the triumph of a skillfully directed reactionary movement.....

From all the evidence which we have, the conclusion is irresistible that they sought to establish a form of government which would effectually cur and restrain democracy..... (Smith, 1965, pp.27, 29-30, 32, 33-34, 36-37, 38-39)

2.Smith's General Explanation of American Political History as a Continuous Struggle between Jeffersonian Defenders of Local Self-government and Anti-Jeffersonian Extenders of Centralized Government: The Defeat of the Former by the Latter

Furthermore, Smith broadened his conspiracy theory of the making of the Constitution into a general explanation of American political history as a continuous struggle between Jeffersonian defenders of local self-government and anti-Jeffersonian extenders of centralized government. In his view the former had been defeated by the latter. Let us first see how Smith viewed the defeat of state government by federal government:

A.The defeat of State Government by Federal Government

The effects of the conservative reaction were not confined to the general

government. The movement to limit the power of the popular majority was felt in the domain of state as well as national politics.....

With the progress of this movement to restore the system of checks in the state constitutions the governor regained his independence of the legislature and also many of the rights and prerogatives of which the Revolution had deprived him.....

This tendency to make the public official less directly dependent upon the people or their immediate representatives is clearly seen in other important changes made in the state constitutions Popular control over the legislative was diminished by lengthening the terms of the members of both houses and by providing that the upper house should be elected for a longer term than the lower.....

The influence of public opinion on the state government was greatly weakened by the constitutional changes.....

These changes in the state constitutions by which the executive and judicial branches of the government acquired the veto power amounted in practice to the creation of a four-chambered legislature. By thus increasing the number of bodies which it was necessary for the people to control in order to secure the legislation which they desired, their power to influence the policy of the state government was thereby diminished.....

The above mentioned changes in the constitutions of the older states may be attributed in large measure to the reaction against democracy which brought about the adoption of the Federal Constitution. They may be regarded as an expression of that distrust and fear of democracy which filled the minds of those who framed and set up our Federal government..... In view of the widespread sentiment which amount to a blind and unthinking worship of the Constitution, it is not surprising that the political institutions of the general government should have been largely copied by the states.....

.....the policy of dividing authority and parceling it out between separate and distinct organs of government has been carried much farther in the state than in the Federal Constitution. Unlike the Federal government in which executive power is centralized in the President, the state constitutions have created a number of separate officials, boards and commissions, some directly elected and some appointed, independently of each other..... This means that instead of one executive the state has many.....

In our state governments the subdivision of authority has been carried so far that no effective control over the enactment or enforcement of state laws is possible. Under the influence of the doctrine of checks and balances the policy

of widely distributing political authority has inured to the benefit of those private interests which are ever seeking to control the government for their own ends, since it has supplied the conditions under which the people find it difficult to fix the blame for official misconduct……(Smith, 1965:230, 232, 234, 238, 243-44, 247)

B.The Greatest Failure of Municipal Government in American Democracy

Turning from state government to municipal government, Smith was “perfectly reasonable” to expect that “popular government would reach its highest development in the cities.” For here “modern democracy was born; here we find the physical and social conditions which facilitate interchange of thought and concerted action on the part of the people.” Moreover, “the government of the city is more directly and immediately related to the citizens than is the government of state or nation. It touches them at more points, makes more demands upon them is more vitally related to their everyday life and needs than either state or national government.” for these reasons “the most conspicuous success of democracy should be the government of present-day cities,” and under “a truly democratic system this would doubtless be the case.” (Smith, 1965:250-51) But to Smith’s disappointment, “in this country the most glaring abuses and most conspicuous failure of government occur in the cities.” (Smith, 1965:251)

For Smith, the “greatest failure” of municipal government in America was due to the constitutional system of checks and balances by which all effective power to regulate municipal matters is withheld from the majority and hence to the fact that popular control is reduced to a minimum in the American cities:

The important changes in municipal government were made after [the Revolution], and may be regarded as an effect of the adoption of the Federal Constitution. As the centralization of authority in the hands of the common council could not be reconciled with the new doctrine of checks and balances, municipal government was reorganized on the plan of distributed powers. This effort to readjust the political organization of the city and make it conform to the general scheme of the Federal government is seen in the municipal charters granted after the adoption of the Constitution. The tendency toward a bi-cameral council, the extension of the term for which members of the council were elected and the veto power of the mayor may be attributed to the influence of the Constitution……

The city is organized, like the state government, on the plan of distributed powers and diffused responsibility. It contains, as a rule, an elaborate system of

checks which afford little opportunity for the prompt and effective expression of local public opinion in the administration of municipal affairs. At the same time, it gives the municipal authorities power to inaugurate and carry out policies to which local public sentiment may be strongly opposed.....

The evils of municipal government are..... the evils of a system which limits the power of the majority in the interest of the minority. (Smith, 1965, pp.250, 288, 290)

C.The Cause and Consequences of the State Government’s Refusal to Recognize the Municipal Government’s Right to Local Self-Government

In Smith’s opinion, “Under any consistent application of the theory of democracy a city would be entitled to the fullest measure of local self-government. It ought to be given an absolute free hand to initiate and carry out any policies of purely local concern.” (Smith, 1965:252) However, the fact showed him that the American city had not possessed this right:

Local self-government is recognized neither in theory nor in practice under our political scheme. The true local unit is the city, and this, according to our legal and constitutional theory, is merely the creature of the state legislature. The latter called it into being, determines what powers it may exercise, and may strip it of them at pleasure. According to the prevailing practice of our state legislatures and the almost uniform decisions of our courts the exercise of local self-government by our cities is to be regarded as a mere privilege and not right. (Smith, 1965:252-53)

For Smith, the failure to recognize the right of local self-government as fundamental in any scheme of democracy was “unfortunate.” Some of the worst evils of municipal government would have been avoided, however, if authority once granted to legislature to interfere in purely local matters. The refusal of the state government to recognize an appropriate sphere of municipal activity which it would have no right to invade, according to Smith, had been “the main cause of corruption and inefficiency in municipal government.” (Smith, 1965:255)

Why the state government refused to recognize the municipal government’s right to local self-government? The theory of conspiracy was again Smith’s answer:

These restrictions upon the powers of cities indicate a fear that too much local self-government might jeopardize the interests of the propertied classes. This attitude

on the part of those who have framed and interpreted our state constitutions is merely an expression of that distrust of majority rule which is the distinguishing feature of the American system of government. It is in the cities that the nonpossessing classes are numerically strongest and the inequality in the distribution of wealth most pronounced. This largely explains the reluctance of the state to allow cities a free hand in the management of local affairs. A municipal government responsive to public opinion might be too much inclined to make the public interests a pretext for disregarding property rights. State control of cities, then, may be regarded as a means of protecting the local minority against the local majority. Every attempt to reform this system must encounter the opposition of the property-owning class, which is one of the chief reasons why all efforts to establish municipal self-government have thus far largely failed

.the power of the mass is limited in the interest of the property owing class. The chief evils of municipal government in this country have their source not in majority but in minority rule. It is in the city where we find a numerically small but very wealthy class and a large class owning little or no property that the general political movement toward democracy has encountered the most obstinate resistance

The numerical preponderance of the property-owning class in the country and of the property-less class in the cities must be taken into account in any attempt to find an explanation of the reluctance on the part of the state to recognize the principle of municipal self-government. When we consider that the state government, even under universal suffrage, is largely government by taxpaying property owners, we can understand why the progress toward municipal democracy has been slow. Under universal suffrage municipal self-government would mean the ascendancy of the property-less class, and this, from the standpoint of those who control the state government, would jeopardize the interests of the property-holding minority.

This is doubtless one of the chief reasons why the state government has not been willing to relinquish its control over municipal affairs (Smith, 1965:277, 283-84, 285)

What had been the consequences of state government's refusal to recognize municipal government's right to local self-government? For Smith, it had been doubtlessly serious: the lack of local democracy in the sense of state interference in municipal affairs, of municipal government's dependence on state legislature, and of party machine's use of state legislature for selfish ends at the expense of public interest:

The policy of state interference in municipal affairs was the inevitable outgrowth of the doctrine that cities had no powers except such as had been expressly given, or were necessarily implied in their charters. This lack of the power of initiative made it necessary for cities, as they increased in size and complexity, to make constant appeals to the legislature for permission to supply their wants. Every new problem which the city had to deal with, every new function which it had to perform, was a ground for state interference. This necessity of invoking the aid of the state legislature, constantly felt in every rapidly growing city, tended to develop a feeling of dependence upon legislative intervention as an indispensable factor in the solution of local problems. Thus the refusal of the state government to recognize the right of municipal initiative compelled the cities to welcome state interference as the only means of dealing with the new problems with which they were being continually confronted.....

The city was thus placed at the mercy of the state government, since the legislature could make the needs of the municipality or the protection of the general interests of the state a pretext for any interference calculated to further the private or partisan ends of those who controlled the legislative machine. As cities increased in importance it was found that this unlimited power over them could be made a valuable asset of the party machine in control of the state legislature. The city offered a rich and tempting field for exploitation. It had offices, large revenue, spent vast sums in public improvements, let valuable contracts of various kinds and had certain needs, as for water, light, rapid transit, etc., which could be made the pretext for granting franchises and other privileges on such terms as would ensure large profits to the grantees at the expense of the general public. That the political machine in control of the state government should have yielded to the temptation to make a selfish use of its power in this direction, is only what might have been expected. (Smith, 1965:255-57)

3. McConnell's Estimation of Smith's Grievance and Theory of Conspiracy

Smith's grievance and theory of conspiracy was, in the view of McConnell, "a direct inheritance from Populism, which with all the certainty of rural fundamentalism held that a usurpation of political power had taken at the direct expense of those who labor in the earth" and that evil was private power in a democracy, which "came only through conspiracy and corruption of honest forms of government." (McConnell, 1966:32-33) If there was a conspiracy it was, in Smith's eyes, one that dated from 1787, had been in continuous existence, and was intermittently locked in struggle with

the rising democracy of the masses.

According to McConnell, Smith was one of the most important figures of the Progressive Movement; his accusation of usurpation of power by private interests was right but whose theory of conspiracy was wrong:

Its primary accusation, that the special interests had amassed power, was undeniable. In their identification of power, the Progressives were correct more often than not. Yet in their extension into a theory of conspiracy of the discovery of business interests behind city machines, of railroads behind party organizations within the legislatures, of bankers behind the United States Senate, there was an illusion. These interests — selfish certainly and sometimes predatory—were in no massive combination, nor did they have a common purpose. Their agreement was based only upon the needs of logrolling, transitory in nature and pragmatic always. (McConnel, 1966:46-47)

In this sense Smith's description of the anti-Jeffersonian tradition of anti-local democracy in America seemed to be correct, though the cause he attributed to it was not. But from my point of view, the American democratic tradition did contain Jeffersonian elements of participatory democracy, though it was neither completely Jeffersonian nor exactly the original idea of Jefferson himself. It was both petty-Jeffersonian and ultra-Jeffersonian and was expressed in the Populist and Progressive tradition of democratic ideal, in the democratic tradition of New England town meeting, and in the persistence of Jeffersonian ideology of small community.

III. THE PETTY-JEFFERSONIAN TRADITION OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

1. Two Themes of the American Populist Tradition of Democratic Ideal: Big Government and Direct Democracy

Populism, as emphasized by Christopher Lasch, “derived not from Marx but from the physiocratic tradition and from the democracy of Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln.” Thus, in Lasch's view, Populists regarded industrialization and concentration of industrial production “with loathing, as leading to bureaucracy, the fragmentation of experience, and the tyranny organization.” (Lasch, 1966:6) No doubt, populism has been an important element in the Jeffersonian tradition of American

democracy. Simon Lazarus has summarized “the ideological and political profile of the American populist tradition” as follows:

1. The populist ideal—the notion that power is illegitimate unless subjected to the effective sovereignty of the public—has fathered two recurrent themes in twentieth-century reform politics in the United States. One of these is “big government” —the goal of conferring on government the capacity to control major centers of private power, the second is “direct democracy” —the goal of removing impediments to direct popular control of government itself.

2. In somewhat different ways, this ideal has shaped three specific reform movements: the Populist-Progressive effort of 1890-1915, the New Deal during the 1930s, and the growing contemporary concern focused on consumer and environmental protection and on the integrity of the electoral system.

3. Though broadly approved by the American people the populist ideal is in practice mocked by the actual structure of relations between government and centers of private power, in the everyday reality of politics…… “minorities rule” — rather than the public.

4. Since the late nineteenth century, when populist rhetoric was the staple of the knights of Labor and of the agrarian Populist Party, populist ideology has lost its original base among disadvantage interest groups. Instead it has become the ward of tiny elites, in and especially out of political office, these populist-oriented elites come to their idealistic commitment through professional involvement with the mechanisms for depicting government—as scholars, newsmen, judges, reform legislators, and bureaucratic leaders. These elites lack the wealth and organizational requisites of power, their only source of influence is their facility to persuade the public to approve and indirectly support their efforts to stop abuses of powerful special interests. (Lazarus, 1974:167-68)

Since industrialism placed unprecedented power in the private hands of great corporations (and subsequently in labor unions, agricultural, trade, and professional associations), the populist ideal of democracy has followed two separate programmatic paths. First, it has produced the idea of “big government,” of regulation—the notion that government, as representative of the people, should expand its power to offset and control the power of private interests, especially business. Second, the populist ideal has found expression in the idea of “direct democracy.” Its proponents have sought measures addressed to opening government itself to more direct popular participation and control. From the point of view of Lazarus, “Both themes— ‘big government’ and ‘direct democracy’ —are opposite sides of the same ideological coin; both seek to enhance the

capacity of the public, through the mechanisms of democratic government, to control the special interests that dominate the nation's economic and social structure" (Lazarus, 1974:11)

These two themes were each voiced by the original Populist Party of the early 1890s, they shaped the objectives of the Progressive movement as it emerged a decade later. And twenty years after the 1912 election—in that year public support for populist ideology was so unanimous that all three major party candidates ran on platforms that virtually copied the Populist Platform of 1892—the Populist ideal returned to structure much of the New Deal. However, the reform philosophy of the 1930s left half the Populist tradition behind. Although new Deal leaders were out to subordinate corporate power to the public interest, they showed unquestioning confidence that government could get the job done—that it could “take control” of the economy and the nation. They assumed that their grand reform enterprise would represent the public interest, and saw no need for direct democratic measures to assure popular control of government. (Lazarus, 1974:11)

2. Two Solutions to Private Power Proposed by the American Progressive Movement: Competition and Reform of the Political Institutions

The Progressive movement is far more relevant to our purpose than the New Deal. It is so not because the significance of Smith's *The Spirit of American Government* lies, as McConnell indicates, “in the fact that he drew the full consequence from the majoritarian tendencies of Progressivism” whose “essential meaning” was not “majority rule.”²² but because the “mainstream of Progressivism” was, as McConnell saw it, “to exercise private power, rather than to oppose it with a greater,” that is, “to restore honesty to government and society by returning government to the public.” (McConnell, 1966:38) Locally, this meant to exclude the corporate interests from politics—and nearly everywhere this meant primarily the rejection of railroad influence. In state after state, the central issue was the power exercised by the railroad political bosses. The thrusts, after the railroads, were the greatest targets of

22 “Certainly, Smith cannot be taken as a characteristic figure of the Progressive Movement, although his book was one of the clearest statements to emerge from Progressivism. The significance of his work lies rather in the fact that he drew the full consequences from the majoritarian tendencies of Progressivism. More perhaps than any other American political writer of stature, he asserted majority rule qualified by few constitutional limitations as the principle of democracy. In one sense, therefore, his accomplishment was a muckraking to the whole of American life.” “Although the *Spirit of American Government* was widely read and had strong influence, majority rule was not the essential meaning of Progressivism. Dedication to majority rule perhaps went without saying among the Progressives, but emphasis upon it as principle did not accord with the dread of political power in any form sometimes seemed to be the central motive of the movement. In Smith's quest of power for the majority, there was a sign of the pervasive and latent ambiguity of the movement. Power as it existed was antagonistic to democracy, but how was it to be cured without the erection of a superior power?” (McConnell, 1966:37-38).

Progressive wrath. The real issue was the power possessed by these new giants of industrial organizations. (McConnell, 1966:38-40)

Two solutions to private power were proposed by the Progressive. One was competition, already in 1990, however, there were expressions of doubt that this solution would work. (McConnell, 1966:40) another solution, reform of the political institutions themselves, was the alternative the Progressive preferred. As McConnell put it:

Institutional reform was a standard program almost everywhere the Progressives came to office, the direct primary, the initiative and referendum, and a commission form of city government were the essentials of the plan. Together these reforms would return government to the people and drive the corporation from politics. The primary would upset the system by which a handful of men chose the candidates for important offices; the initiative and referendum would check the corruption of the legislatures; and the commission plan would smash the city machines. In larger outline, the program would spell the end of party corruption. (McConnell, 1966:40)

According to Smith, the institutional reform of the Progressive movement had a single aim: to make the public will of the majority supreme over the private power of the minority; but it had two different methods simultaneously: changing the existing pseudorepresentative democracy into a genuine, representative democracy (Jeffersonian representative democracy) and establishing a direct democracy (Jeffersonian participatory democracy):

The plan for depriving the minority of the power to control the selection of public officials..... is the direct primary..... Our present system in its practical operation is not a democracy. It is not truly representative, but misrepresentative. To prevent this evil—this betrayal of public trust in the interest of the minority—is the aim of the direct primary.....

But while the direct nomination of candidates would doubtless go far toward making public officials respect the wishes of the people, it would not provide adequate protection against misconduct in office under our plan of election for a definite term without any effective power of removal. A corrupt official may often find that by favoring private interests at the expense of the people who have elected him, he can afford to forfeit all chance of re-election. The independence of public officials which our forefathers were so anxious to secure has been found to be a fruitful source of corruption. A realization of this fact has been responsible for the introduction of the recall system under which the people enforce official responsibility through their power to removal by a vote of lack of confidence.....

Simultaneous with this movement to make government really representative by enforcing official responsibility is another movement which also aims to make the will of the majority supreme, but by a totally different method of procedure. This is the movement looking toward the establishment of the initiative and the referendum. Instead of leaving power in the hands of representative bodies and seeking to make them responsible as the first plan of reform contemplates, the second plan would guard representative bodies against temptation by divesting them of all powers which they are liable to misuse and conferring them directly upon the people, this is merely an attempt to get back to the basic idea of the old town meeting, where local measures were directly proposed and adopted or rejected by the people.....

But the evolution has been toward a direct rather than toward a representative democracy..... The system of checks which limited the power of the majority made the legislature largely an irresponsible body; and since it could not be trusted, it was necessary to take out of its hands the power it was mostly to abuse. (Smith, 1965:350-53)

Smith emphasized that the establishment of direct democracy was not to replace representative democracy, but to supervise it:

The prevalent lack of confidence in our state legislatures is no indication of hostility to the principle of representative government; for representative government in the true sense means government that is responsible to the people..... A government of the representative type, if responsive to public sentiment, would answer all the requirements of a democratic state. It would at the same time be merely carrying out in practice what has long been the generally accepted..... view of our political what has long been the generally accepted..... view of our political system, the adoption of some effective plan of direct nomination and recall of officials would accomplish much in the way of restoring confidence in legislature bodies. To this extent it would check the tendency to place the law-making power directly in the hands of the people. Popular ratification of all important laws would be unnecessary, if our legislative bodies were really responsible to the people. Nevertheless, the popular veto is a power which the people should have the right to use whenever occasion demands. This would prevent the possibility of legislation in the interest of the minority as now often happens. The popular veto through the referendum is not, however, of itself sufficient. The people need the power to initiate legislation as well as the power to defeat it. The initiative combined with the referendum would make the majority in fact, as it now is in name only, the final authority in all matters of legislation. (Smith, 1965:354-55)

“The zeal for direct democracy via initiative and referendum brought reforms,” McConnell wrote, “but the results were trival beside the promise.” (McConnell, 1996:47) The Populist and Progressive ideal of direct democracy failed to develop into Jeffersonian tradition of participatory democracy, either nationally or locally in practice. To be sure, that tradition has existed locally somewhere, but it had nothing to do with the Populist and Progressive reforms. It had existed prior to the latter and it has existed until now in the six states of New England: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. We should pay some attention to the operation of Jeffersonian participatory democracy in New England.

3.The Operation of Jeffersonian participatory Democracy in New England Town Meetings

From their earliest existence as English to the present time, the New England states have used the town as the basic unit of the local government. Counties, sanitary districts, pack districts, incorporated municipalities, etc., have thus never had the importance there they have assumed elsewhere. In a recent period, with the system in relative decline, there were some 1,400 towns in the six states of New England. The typical New England town as often as not included both rural and built-up areas. The town varied very greatly in size, but were for the most part small in point of population: fully a third had less than 500 citizens, only a very few were as large as 25,000 and the average was around two to three thousand. (Lancaster, 1937:42-43; Snider, 1950:294-95) Almost all these 1,400 towns were governed by town meetings, a little different, as far as organization was concerned, from state to state, but enough alike for a single general description to serve for all of them. It was state law that vested the governing power of the town meeting, though of course many of the towns and town meetings were going concerns long before the state in which they were situated came into existence.²³ All qualified voters residing within the town limits were ipso facto members of the meeting, which convened once each year.²⁴ Special meeting could be called to deal with unusual problems or situations that arose, but this rarely happened, and most town business was transacted annually at the regular town meeting.

The official call for the town meeting was drawn up and issued by the town’s board of selectmen. It took the form of a “warrant,” posted in various prominent

23 For an account of the seventeenth-century origins of the New England town meetings, see Anne B. MacLear, Early New England Towns (Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, published by the author in 1908).

24 The annual town meetings were usually held in the early spring or “mud season” except in Connecticut, where meetings were held in October.

places about the town well in advance of the meetings, so that everybody would know when and where the meeting would occur and what matters it would consider. The morning of meeting day was devoted to balloting for various town officials, such as the moderator, board of selectmen, town clerk, tax assessor, tax collector, treasurer, library trustees, constable, etc. Voting was normally by secret ballot, although in general secrecy was neither highly valued nor rigidly enforced. After lunch, the citizens assembled in the town hall and, with the “moderator” presiding, transacted other business specified in the warrant. They discussed the “town report,” which was in fact a series of individual reports from the several town officials covering their activities through the previous year (it was compiled and printed by the selectmen, then circulated among the citizens before the meeting). they made appropriations, fixed tax rates, enacted town laws, and drew up such special instructions as seemed to be needed for the town officials. Finally the meeting was adjourned, to be followed, in most towns, by a community dinner and dance.²⁵

Between annual town meetings, a board of selectmen, three to five in number, was the chief administrative authority of the town. It granted licenses, lay out highways, paid town bills, prepared the agenda and issued the warrant for the next town meeting, and, as noted above, compiled the town report.

In the past half-century the inhabitants of a number of New England towns with population above five or six thousand came to feel that the pure form of the traditional town meetings had served their needs less well than it had done those of their parents and grandparents. As their towns grew, they found it increasingly difficult, for one thing, to get all the town’s citizens into a single hall, and, for another, to persuade all of them to turn up. Increasing size had, moreover, brought with it increasingly complicated administrative and policy problems that a large popular assembly cannot—in the view of many people—deal with successfully. On the other hand, there had been a great reluctance to junk the town meeting altogether and replace it with a mayor council or commission form of organization known as the “limited town meeting.” (usually thirty to forty). Only the latter could actually cast votes at such town meetings as many occurred during their incumbency. The meetings themselves were called and organized in the traditional fashion, still exercised the town’s governing powers, and still admitted to the floor and permitted to speak any citizen who wished to attend and make known his views. The only difference between the traditional and limited form, in short, was that the number of citizens who were entitled to be counted when votes were

25 For descriptions of organizations and procedures of recent New England town meetings, see Lancaster, 1937:43ff; Snider, 1950:349-56; Fairlie and Kneier 1930:430ff; Manny, 1930, chapter 4; Gould, 1940; Sly, 1930, chapters 6-7, Palmer, ed, 1940; and White, 1949. Gould’s contains a colorful description of meeting-day proceedings, liberally illustrated with photographs of some Maine town meetings, and gives the reader the flavor of the town meeting better than any other available work.

taken was “limited.”²⁶

Experience with the town meeting indicated that this way of dealing with popular consultation ran into genuine difficulties when either or both of two things happened to a community in which it was used. For one thing, the town meeting tended to develop stresses and strains when the town’s population went above, say, five thousand, for then either not everyone could be present or, worse still, not everyone even tried to be present, so that the meeting lost its traditional meaning as a gathering of all the citizenry. For another things, the town meeting appeared to go halt and lame when a community using it developed within itself groups so conscious of their “special” interests (as opposed to the interests of the whole town) that they tended to vote together as blocs on most public questions/ This problem had become particularly troublesome in northern New England, which, since the turn of the century, had received substantial numbers of French Canadian immigrants from Quebec.²⁷

4.The Mainstream of American Tradition of Democracy in Practice: Not Jeffersonian and Populist Participatory Democracy, but Something Else

It is not surprising that with the exception of the New England states, the mainstream of American tradition of democracy has not been Jeffersonian and Populist participatory democracy but something else in practice. It has been semi-Madisonian representative democracy based on semi-Madisonian pluralist democracy, as will be shown in the next essay.

A. The Story of American Agricultural Politics Forsaking Its Jeffersonian and Populist Ideal of Democracy

This has been true even of agricultural politics, once the base of Jeffersonian and populist ideal of democracy, as Lazarus told the story:

[T]he Populist Part’s first national campaign turned out also to be its last. And … … though populist rhetoric was soon thereafter embraced by the Democrats’ new leader William Jennings Bryan, the agrarian constituency that activated both the Populists and the Bryanite Democrats was already … … growing disenchanted with the populist ideal itself. In the first decade of the twentieth century, agricultural politics had chosen for itself a truly revolutionary course. A new network of pressure groups sprang from what once had been a base of the ideological politics

26 Sly, 1930, chapter 7, has the best description of the “limited” town meetings. See also Manny, 1930, chapter 4.

27 Cf. Gould, 1940, p.60. See also Snider, 1950:350.

of populism. At length there emerged a virtual private government with internal autonomy and external command over governmental authority unmatched by any other commercial interest in the country.....

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a novel institution known as the "country agent" appeared in farm counties across the nation..... In 1914 Congress gave the country agent system federal financial backing..... In order to solidify their influence, the agents..... created tight organizations composed of their local clientele; these organizations, which seem from the first to have been dominated by the richer and more skillful farmers in each community, were called farm bureaus. By the end of World War II the local farm bureaus had united to become the National Farm Bureau Federation (NFBF).

The NFBF showed its great power soon after it was formed.....

But the power—the wealth—of the Farm Bureau constituency grew as their numbers decreased and their natural economic position worsened. Instead of opposing the idea of anti-monopolism, they set out to use the government to establish monopoly power for themselves. During the 1920s they got the newly formed farm bloc in Congress to pass two ambitious schemes for government sanctioned price fixing, the equalization fee and the export-debenture plans The 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), drafted in the Farm Bureau's Washington headquarters, explicitly declared that it was a goal of national policy to guarantee farmers an amount for their goods equal to the purchasing power of the dollars earned by farmers in the years 1909-14 ("party"), the period of their great prosperity.....

Eventually, the forces of organized agriculture, that could not beat the monopolists and fixers in the 1890's, had joined 'em, and quite successfully..... Not only has American politics gained a formidable concentration of power, it has lost a once-important constituency for populist idealism..... (Lazarus, 1974:128-30, 132)

B. The Story of Evolution of the American Labor Movement, an Unreliable Supporter of the Populist Ideal

Substantially the same story can be told about the evolution of the American labor movement, though labor has not forsaken the populist ideal as completely as the farmers have. The following story was again, told by Lazarus:

The first stirrings of a national labor movement occurred in the 1880s, just when antecedents of the Populist Party were agitating on the farms. The organization

called itself the Noble Order of the Knights of labor..... Their commitment to the populist ideal and its attendant conceptual paraphernalia—that the interests of all workers, and indeed, all “the people” including consumers, were harmonious and could be mobilized to combat a tiny capitalist elite—mirrored that of the Populist Party itself. In the composition of its membership, and especially of its leadership, the Noble Order of the Knights whose ranks were sprinkled with middle-class representatives, anticipated the Progressives more perfectly than the Populists did. The knights, however, proved an ephemeral presence in industry and politics. By 1900, they were gone, and they left behind few enduring institutional changes to arrest to their once formidable presence.

Like the Populists, the knights were replaced by an organization that followed a pluralist strategy for improving the lot of their constituents, the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Indeed, the AFL was at first far more advanced and self-conscious about its pluralists goals and its contempt for populist ideology than the infrastructure that evolved from the county agent system.....

The AFL organized workers and sought higher wages for them. It did not promote democratic ideals..... Samuel Gompers, its leader, is famous for his answer to the question, “What are the goals of your organization?” “None!” he replied. For movements like those the Populists or the knights, Gompers had only the greatest contempt.....

In any event, the goal of organized labor, like that of organized agriculture, was internal political autonomy and external market power. This goal was realized, again, as in the case of agriculture, under the populist aegis of the New Deal. Then the AFL and the new Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO), obtained the Norris-LaGuardia Act, the Wagner Act, and the United States v. Hucheson decisions from the New Deal Supreme Court, together, these legal changes conferred on organized agriculture by the combination of the AMAA and the Capper-volstead Antitrust Immunity Act which the Farm Bureau and its allies among the packers and processors had obtained in 1922. The unions got substantial freedom from antitrust restraints, and a variety of governmental inducements and sanctions to aid them affirmatively in organizing and bargaining collectively.....

Along with its new economic and political power, labor acquired the image as a bulwark of progressive policies beyond its own immediate interests. This reputation was linked to its close alliance with the national Democratic Party..... and the reputation of the unions as a political base for progressive policies lives on.

For the most part, this reputation is deserved. Except for the churches there is no organized interest of any consequence, other than the unions, that uses its power for ends other than the immediate economic welfare of its own constituents.....

However, despite the major role which organized labor plays..... in an array of welfare, civil rights, and even consumer causes, the unions are not on the whole a reliable supporter of the populist ideal. They are, after all, devoted to putting cash in the pockets of their members..... Where populist standards clash with labor's economic interests, it is obvious and understandable that the latter must come first.

Even more important, organized labor is not a full-fledged participant in the pluralist system of interest-group bargaining; its wealth and organization are powerful counters with which to influence the behavior of institutions and officials at all levels of government. Because of this power, labor does not really have an interest in promoting the populist image of democracy among the electorate..... (Lazarus, 1974:132-33, 134-36, 137)

IV .THE ULTRA-JEFFERSONIAN TRADITION OF UNLIMITED PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN CONCEPTION

1.The Increasing Radicalization of Jeffersonian Participatory Democracy in Concept in the American Intellectual World

Although in practice there has merely been a petty-Jeffersonian tradition of participatory democracy in America, yet in conception it has not been so. On the contrary, there has been an increasingly ultra-Jeffersonian tradition of unlimited participatory democracy in conception, though not all conceptions of participatory democracy have been ultra-Jeffersonian in the same degree. The increasing radicalization of Jeffersonian participatory democracy in concept has formed a striking contrast to the increasing rarity of Jeffersonian participatory democracy in practice. The former has been prevalent primarily in the American intellectual world. Why has this been so?

A. **The Influence of the Populist Ideal of Democracy Prescribed by Civics Textbooks and Neo-Populist Leaders**

As Lazarus pointed out: “After all, respect for the populist ideal of democracy is implanted in every elementary political science text used in American high schools and colleges..... Americans already believed in it..... In America the populist ideal of democracy is, after all, something like religion.” (Lazarus, 1974, p.80) Hence Lazarus' conclusion about American democratic tradition:

Two distinct species of politics uneasily cohabit its institutions. The routine business of the system is conducted in pluralist terms by pluralist entities. Their

pervasive influence over much of government, especially over legislative committees, administrative agencies, and the mechanisms of campaign finance and organization is, as Grant McConnell has put it, an “open secret,” a brazen but fundamentally unchangeable contradiction of the simple populist ideal prescribed by civics textbook principles. This populist ideal itself generally languishes, except insofar as it is promoted by narrow leadership groups, whose motives are ideological and altruistic……. These leaders are drawn from those professional and educational backgrounds that take political ideals seriously. In practice, this means that many of them come from the same relatively elite social or educational backgrounds that provide an active constituency for financial and organizational support. Their areas of strength tend to be different from those of pluralist participants in the political struggle—the media, the courts, and the overt parts of the election process. Within established governmental structures, populist partisans operate at a continual disadvantage, though they often vie for control, and sometimes even win it. (Lazarus, 1974:143-44)

Lazarus called these neo-Populists “The Genteel Populists”²⁸ whose influence had been unduly ignored in analyses of American political structures because they had been “elites without power”:

The phenomenon of populist leadership is often ignored in analyses of the nation’s political structure precisely because populist leaders have such a precarious and superficial hold on political influence. They are, paradoxically, elites without power—if power is understood to be the solid base of money and organization that genuine inter-group representatives command. But, though they lack power in this sense, they cannot be dismissed outright. They do have influence and occasionally they do prevail……. The populist democratic faith……. most Americans still consider the true source of legitimate public authority. (Lazarus, 1974:144-45)

B. Contentions About Values and Advantages of Small Community and Local Autonomy

By the same token, although McConnell regarded the corrupted pluralist and representative democracy as an “open secret” in the practice of American democracy (McConnell, 1966, Chapter I) and consider the pure Jeffersonian participatory

28 As the title of his book, “The Genteel Pupulists” also represents the central thesis which Lazarus elaborated in that book.

democracy to be “less and less” relevant to the development of American democratic tradition, (McConnell, 1966:72) yet he asserted that “elements in [Jefferson’s thought have been echoed again and again in many places,” especially that the “value of the small community has been one of the most important political concepts in American history”. (McConnell, 1966:72)

For the most part it has been less a reasoned concept than a fundamental article of faith; but usually it has been argued that a small social unit is more democratic than a large one and that a society formed of small self-governing units is more democratic than others. The meaning of this claim is often uncertain, since the word “democratic” is used to mean different things. In one sense this uncertainty is not important, for to many people local autonomy is by definition the essence of democracy and it would be useless to ask them for the meaning they intend; in this sense the only important questions are what are the limits of the locality and who is included within them.

In another sense, however, it is important to look at the reasons sometimes given in support of belief in local autonomy, since they relate to other values. Perhaps the most common argument is that since local people necessarily know more about local affairs they can govern themselves better than someone who is both physically distant and concerned with other localities as well. Thus the people of a small community will not only know their own problems and have a keen personal interest in their solution, but will also be personally acquainted with local officers and candidates for office. This knowledge will extend to details of terrain and to personalities and character. Moreover, since locally chosen officers will be responsible directly to the people of the locality and to no others, the government will be more responsive to the local people and hence more democratic.

Almost as important is the argument that local autonomy allows participation and discussion. In a large political unit, it is frequently contended, the individual is lost in a large mass and cannot make himself heard; the only participation open to him is an impersonal registration of his vote. In a small unit, by contrast, he can enter into rational discussion of issues and can make his voice heard; hence the political life of a small community is not only more responsible and more democratic because of greater participation, but is also more rational.....

Frequently these arguments are associated with a quite different type of argument, one not strictly concerned with the democratic nature of the small community. This argument holds that life in a small community is comprehensible

and warm and human. Since relationships are not based on formal and impersonal rules but are informal and face to face, life is richer and more meaningful than in a large unit, and in this sense more natural. It is also implied that life is freer, since in a simpler and more comprehensible setting there is less need for law and compulsion. Difficulties and disputes can be adjusted on a personal basis and according to their true merits, without resort to the rigid categories of law. (McConnell, 1966:72-73)

Other contentions about the advantages of the small community stressed its greater efficiency and stability, but “on the whole,” McConnell emphasized, “the important arguments are those offered in support of the greater opportunity for democracy.” (McConnell, 1966:73) In the view of McConnell, indeed, “they have been mingled with the long-existing American belief in the ideal of an agrarian society and have been brought forth in support of small political units of any kind. The nation’s agrarian past has prepared a widespread receptivity for them.” (McConnell, 1966:73-74) Nevertheless, at least as far as the democratic value of freedom is concerned, it had been argued that the advantages of small community can be extended also to small communities other than geographical ones, as McConnell put it:

Small communities other than geographical have also been celebrated as natural homes of liberty. The church, the trade union, association of all kinds have been held in modern times to possess the same virtues as the small town or the small town or the farming locality. The heart of the argument in each instance is that intrinsic value of smallness. A small community may be formed upon the basis of almost any dimension of social difference—function as well as geography, race as well as religion. A geographic community has some advantages through the daily propinquity of its members and their association with a particular bit of land, but even these advantages are not peculiar to such communities. Other forms of association are claimed to have in greater degree an equally important advantage: their voluntary character. A member of such an association is a member by his own choice. He had applied for admission and he remains by his own will…… Moreover, it is arguable that by the act of individual choice a greater degree of homogeneity is achieved in these voluntary associations, and that consequently they offer an even greater degree of freedom from compulsion than does the geographic community. (McConnell, 1966:96)

C. John Dewey and his Descendents’ Contribution to the Existence of an

Ultra-Jeffersonian Tradition of Unlimited Participatory Democracy in Conception

The arguments for equal participation and free choice in all kinds of small communities represented, from my point of view, the existence of an ultra-Jeffersonian tradition of unlimited participatory democracy in conception. According to Harry M. Clor, such a tradition had existed ever since the end of the New Deal era, and John Dewey and his descendents were responsible for it:

The Wilsonian generation of progressives was primarily concerned with the extension of popular democracy and individual liberties, but it was generally cognizant of limiting consideration. The generations of liberals that have followed have been less and less cognizant of limiting considerations. Many were wholly preoccupied with the struggles of the New Deal era—the fight against the “economic royalists” and for the welfare state. And, after that…… was the emergence of an unlimited democratic perspective increasingly insensitive to any considerations that are not libertarian or equalitarian in character. “The ideal of equality of opportunity and of freedom for all,” said John Dewey, “is the genuinely spiritual element of our tradition.” In Deweyan philosophy the other elements of our tradition are assimilated to this idea, or they are denigrated as obstacles to its fulfillment.

Dewey sought the solution of the economic inequities and social conflicts of modern times in a thoroughgoing democratization of all politics, society, and morality. He worked toward an all-embracing democratic culture in which the values of equality and freedom would permeate and shape every area of life. These values would rule not only in the political sphere, but also in social relations, in economic life, in education, in the family, and in the human personality. But Dewey’s conception of these things turns out to be rather complex and, at times, obscure. His descendents…… tend to provide more simple conceptual formulations. This is a formulation that summarizes the viewpoint of many contemporary liberals toward the basic principles and values of the American community: “The final aim of…… [this] society is as much freedom as possible for the individual human being.”

“Freedom” is not always defined with care. When a definition is given, it is, in the final analysis, very likely to be something like: the maximization of opportunities for each individual to pursue self-chosen ends (whatever they may be) up to the point where he interferes with the equal right of others to pursue self-chosen ends. All political associations are at the service of this final goal, and their worth is to be measured by it. (Clor, 1969:96-97)

2.The Rise of the New Left's Ultra-Jeffersonian Conception of Comprehensive and Exclusive Participatory Democracy

A. The Unintentional Consequence of Libertrain's Ultra-Jeffersonian Idea of Freedom and Equality on the New Left's Search For Participatory Democracy

In Clor's opinion, the 'liberal teachers' of "the older and New Deal schools of American liberalism" were not to blame directly for the rise of the New Left's ultra-Jeffersonian conception of comprehensive and exclusive participatory democracy because he thought that they "definitely wish to preserve fundamental elements of representative and constitutional democracy." But Clor was not "so certain" about "an intermediate school of libertarian" between the older Jeffersonian liberals and the ultra-Jeffersonian New Leftists. (Clor, 1969:100) He tended to consider these libertarians to be ultra-Jeffersonian harbingers who were directly responsible for the New Left's ultra-Jeffersonian harbingers who were directly responsible for the New Left's ultra-Jeffersonian insistence on unlimited participatory democracy with its equalitarian and libertarian dogmas:

The liberal teachers of the last generation presupposed the conditions of lawfulness and civility, but they failed to articulate and teach these things. Therefore, their students (or readers, or audiences) did not learn them. What the students learned was "equality of opportunity" and "as much freedom as possible for the individual" as the sole criteria by which society, laws, institutions, and policies are to be measured. They learned to judge all things political and social by the democratic standard, and only by the democratic standard. They have not been taught how to recognize and respect a variety of public interests, some of which cannot appropriately be measure by that stand and alone. Consequently, they are most indisposed to weight social values that may compete with the demands of personal liberty and equality and require some limitation of these demands.

These students become educators of various sorts (professors, writers, group leaders, parents), and, in the climate of opinion created by their teachings, the claims of the democratic principle are pushed steadily father toward their utmost extreme. "Equality of opportunity" tends to become a demand for substantial equality, or absolute equality of influence and power of all citizens. And this leads, finally, to the insistence upon "participatory democracy" in

every area of our lives. “Freedom for the individual” tends to become a series of escalating demands for liberation from any externally imposed moral or conventional restraints—in the school, the family, and society at large. In the more advanced stages of this movements, the meaning of “freedom” is extended to include a right to complete personal independence or “individuality” —a right to reject at will the claims upon one’ s allegiance to any law, institution, or civil society. (Clor, 1969:98-99)

In Clor’s view, “It is in this way that decent liberalism has contributed, quite unintentionally, to the rise of the New Left.” (Clor, 1969:99) But the unintentional consequence was serious for him: the New Leftists were vulnerable to non-Jeffersonian extremists like Herbert Marcuse in their search for participatory democracy, and the participatory democracy became absolute democracy.

In the confusion promoted by the absence of clear standard and thoughtful leadership, many things can happen. One thing that can happen is the emergence into prominence of doctrines and forms of conduct that are incompatible with any kind of free society. Herbert Marcuse urges the further development of “minorities intolerant—militantly intolerant and disobedient” to all the rules of the established order. the replacement of the established order by pure democracy requires “withdrawal of tolerance from regressive movements before they can become active; intolerance even toward thought, opinion, and word, and finally, intolerance in the opposite direction, that is, toward the self-styled conservatives.…” These ideas have had their influence among the New Left. They have been acted upon by radical students seeking, among other things, “participatory democracy.” Thus the very distinction between what is and what is not democratic is finally lost in a fanatical striving for absolute democracy. (Clor, 1969:100-101)

B. The Unintentional Influence of Lincoln’ s Well-known Motto,” Government of the People, by the People, For the People,” on the New Left’ s Search for Participatory Democracy

In addition to the unintentional consequence of ultra-Jeffersonian idea of freedom and equality on the New Left’s search for participatory democracy, Abraham Lincoln’s well-known motto— “government of the people, by the people, for the people” —also had an ultra-Jeffersonian influence on that search unintentionally. In his famous Gettysburg Address, Lincoln concluded with a dedication to “the great task,”

remaining before Americans, that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”²⁹ It is not clear that in making such a conclusion whether Lincoln was prescribing the ideal of American democracy or describing its current condition. If it was meant to be an ideal, what did that ideal mean? Lincoln himself never defined it. Few others did.

In 1948, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prepared a questionnaire on ideological conflicts concerning democracy and sent it to more than five hundred experts in the related fields of philosophy, law, history, political science, sociology, economics, communications analysis, and logic. Approximately twenty-five percent of those consulted returned replies to the whole questionnaire or to some portions of it. (McKeon, et., 1954:viii) The questionnaire contains thirty questions. The eighth one is titled “The Lincoln Formula,” which is stated as follows:

Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg phrase “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” has often been taken as a point of departure for clarification of the essential criteria of “democracy”; the preposition of indicating the obedience of the people to the government, the preposition by indicating the active participation of the people in the formation of the decision taken by the government, and the preposition for indicating the value of these decisions for the general welfare of the people. (McKeon, ed., 1951:516)

The eighth question is asked in this way: “How far do these formulations correspond to your own interpretation of the Lincoln formula?” (McKeon, ed., 1951:516) Few respondents answered this question. The one who did was C.I. Lewis:

I should interpret Lincoln’s Gettysburg address as a tribute to the dead, and not as a political document. If taken in the latter sense, then, “of the people” could not well mean anything different from “by the people,” since any government is of those governed, and this sense of “of,” in which it differs from “by” could hardly be intended. And any democracy will be “for the people if the people (who rule in a democracy) are “for” themselves.

But the Lincoln formula cannot very well furnish any adequate criteria for determining whether anything is democratic or not. In any language, prepositions are among the most ambiguous of all words. For example, Webster’s International Dictionary lists twenty distinct meanings of “of,” eleven of “for,” indicating also variants (up to the number of eight) under some of these. To make any issue turn upon the meaning of prepositions is, obviously, to

29 Abraham Lincoln, “It is for Us the Living”-Gettysburg Address, 1863, in Current, ed., 1967, p.285.

invite complete confusion. (McKeon, ed., 1951:166-67)

If the Lincoln formula is considered to be a definition of democracy, it is “useless and misleading” in the opinion of Ernest van den Haag who was not a respondent to UNESCO’s questionnaire and might even not know it, but merely commented on that well-known formula:

Lincoln’s ringing “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” is a characterization of democracy and of its expected effects that “shall not perish from the earth.” But as a definition it is useless and misleading. “Democracy” defines a relationship between two groups, a large one, the people, and a small one, the government, such that the government derives its just powers from the people. The two cannot be identical. If democracy were literally “government by the people” there would be only one group. Only after recognizing two separate groups—people and government—can we define their relationship and specify their mutual powers and, finally, indicate how members of one group become members of the other. Unless we acknowledge that democracy is government by the people, we cannot restrict the power of either.

Regarded as a definition, the first part of Lincoln’s characterization would be self-defeating: it eliminates the distinction between the elements to be defined. But the last part of Lincoln’s phrase would give use license to define as “government for the people” a well-meaning and clever tyrant who governs “for the people” (that is, in their best interest) could not be regarded as a tyrant. A foolish democratic regime, unsuccessful in its enterprises, or a democratic regime which by mandate of the people (who might misconceive their interests) does not govern “for the people” would cease to be democratic according to this definition. So also would a democratic government ousted by the opposition in a free vote, for the opposition usually clamors that the government to be replaced is not “for the people.” And if the opposition wins, the voters have agreed. Are we to conclude then, paradoxically, that only tyrannical government—which cannot be ousted—are “for the people” and democratic? Indeed, any tyrant who merely believes that his tyranny is for the people—and what tyrant does not?—could rightly claim that it is democratic. Hitler and Stalin would become prime democrats by this criterion. (Haag, 1972:84-85)

What should be the right definition of democracy for Haag? For him it should be anything but “for the people”: “We have no objective way of deciding what or who is ‘for the people.’ If we did there would be no need for decision by voting. We should install the government that could objectively be shown to govern for the people.’ We

should leave government to experts as we do engineering.” (Hagg, 1972:85) In Hagg’s opinion:

What is distinctive about democracy is not that the “government is for the people,” but that the people are perpetually able to decide whether they are for the government. Neither the wisdom of the people’s decision, nor of their government, makes a regime democratic; the power kept by the people to make decisions on who is to govern does. The people’s decisions can be misguided. Possibly a dictatorship could do better for them, at least at times. But democracy is not defined by any result. It must be defined as a process by which the citizens keep the power to elect a government as foolish or wise as they see fit and to correct their mistakes or make them worse. (Hagg, 1972:85-86)

What Hagg has redefined as a democracy is formal or procedural instead of substantive democracy which, in his view, had been a part of American democratic tradition at least from Lincoln through FDR:

Attempts to make “formal” democracy, as a set of rules or procedures, more attractive by stressing the substantive results to be expected from the procedures, have long been part of the American tradition. But few American theoreticians have been willing to trade in the formal procedures for the sake of the substantive results promised by a “dictatorship of the elite”, fewer still would accept the idea that what is to be given up is not “true” freedom; and hardly any that dictatorships, or will lead to it. Nonetheless, the substantive definition of democracy, which relies on results or promises, and the procedural one, which relies on the intrinsic worth of self-government, have often been combined and confused. In this, FDR followed a tradition which goes back at least to Abraham Lincoln. (Hagg, 1972:84)

This combined and confused tradition of procedural and substantive democracy was perceived, however, by SDSers, as will be seen in the next section, as a betrayal of the pure ideal of democracy: the literal meaning of “government of, by, and for the people.’ Although Lincoln himself was a moderate rather than an extreme Jeffersonian, (Kuo, 1990:55-59) who never advocated unqualified participatory democracy, his formula did have an ultra-Jeffersonian effect on SDS through its literal sense as interpreted by SDSers.

V . SDS' S ULTRA-JEFFERSONIAN NEW LEFT IDEAL OF UNQUALIFIED PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

1.SDS's Commitment to the Literally Jeffersonian-Lincolnian Values of Democracy and Its Disappointment with American People's Contentment with the Status Quo, Ignorance of Alternatives and Fear of Change

SDS's New Left ideal of democracy was mainly stated in its official founding document, "The Port Horon Statement." In this introduction to that statement SDS, first of all, solemnly declared its commitment to the literally Jeffersonian-Lincolnian values of democracy, i.e., the ideal end and ideal means of ultra-Jeffersonian democracy: "Freedom and equality for each individual, government of , by, and for the people—these American values we found good principles by which we could live as men." (SDS, 1969:164) But it discovered that contemporary American democracy had violated those values: "The declaration 'all men are created equal.....' rang hollow before the facts of Negro life in the South and the big cities of the North" ; and "its [American] democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than 'of, by, and for the people.'" (SDS, 1969:164)

This discovery of "the hypocrisy of American ideals" disillusioned SDS. (SDS, 1969, P.164) What disappointed SDS furthermore was the anti-Jeffersonian fact that the vast majority of American people were contented with the status quo, ignorant of alternatives, and fearful of change:

[T]he vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibrium of our society..... s eternally functional parts..... the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present. Beneath the reassuring tones of the politicians, beneath the common opinion that America will "muddle through," beneath the stagnation of those who closed their minds to the future, is the pervading feeling that there simply are no alternatives, that our times have witnessed the exhaustion not only of Utopias, but of any new departures as well..... They fear change itself, since change might smash whatever invisible framework seems to hold back chaos for them now. For most Americans, all crusades are suspect, threatening. The fact that each individual sees apathy in his fellow perpetuates the common reluctance to organize for change. (SDS, 1969:164-65)

As Jeffersonian idealist in spirit, (Kuo, 1989, pp.28, 32) nevertheless, SDS believed that "there is an alternative to the present" and that "something can be done to change circumstances in the school, the workplaces the bureaucracies, the

government.” And what moved SDS was “the search for truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation with them.” (SDS, 1969:165) The New Left democratic alternatives SDS recommended, however, went far beyond Jeffersonian democracy in substance. They were ultra-Jeffersonian: They contained ideal end and ideal means of unqualified participatory democracy.

SDS was quite unhappy or even indignant with the fact that idealism was unduly condemned and realism unjustifiably praised in the contemporary world:

Theoretic chaos has replace the idealistic thinking of old—o reconstitute theoretic order, men have condemned idealism itself. Doubt has replaced hopefulness—and men act out of a defeatism that is labeled realistic. The decline of utopia and hope is in fact one of the defining features of social life today…… To be idealistic is to be considered apocalyptic, deluded. To have no serious aspirations, on the contrary, is to be “tough-mined.” (SDS, 1969:166)

Under such circumstances SDS regarded it as a necessarily initial step, in its enterprise of establishing truly democratic alternatives, to make explicit democratic values, which would be the elements of its ideal end and means of democracy, and to convince people that the creation of those values would be worthwhile. (SDS, 1969:165, 166) This was perhaps the main reason why SDS put the section “Values” immediately after “Introduction: Agenda for a Generation” in the “Port Huron Statement.”

2.SDS’s Definition of Its Democratic Values in Terms of Human Beings, Human Relationships, and Social System

In that section SDS defined its democratic values in terms of “human beings, human relationships, and social system.” (SDS, 1969:166) The first two were concerned with its ideal end of democracy, while the last one was connected with its ideal means of it. First of all, SDS valued ultra-Jeffersonian equality in human capacities for independence to have a way that is one’s own:

We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love…… Men have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creatively…… The goal of man and society should be human independence …… This kind of independence does not mean egotistic individualism—the object is not to have one’s own way so much as it is to have a way that one’s own. (SDS, 1969:166-67)

So SDS does not cherish “egotistic individualism” in “loneliness, estrangement, isolation.” All of which “describe the vast distance between man and today”; “the individualism we affirm is not egoism…… On the contrary, we believe in generosity of a kind that imparts one’s unique individual qualities in the relation to other men, and to all human activity.” (SDS, 1969:167) What SDS cherished was a community based on ultra-Jeffersonian social equality in human relationship:

Human relationships should involve fraternity and honesty…… Human brotherhood must be willed…… as the most appropriate form of social relations. Personal links between man and man are needed, especially to go beyond the partial and fragmentary bonds of function that bind men only as worker to worker, employer to employee, teacher to student, American to Russian.(SDS, 1969:167)

The last but far from being less important democratic value of SDS, emphasized in the “Port Huron Statement,” was a social system by name of “participatory democracy”³⁰

As a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation; governed by two central aims: that the individual share in these social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation. (SDS. 1969:167)

Participatory democracy with two central aims such as these can be interpreted, from my point of view, as SDS’s ideal means of democracy to realize its ideal end of democracy, ultra-Jeffersonian equality. For such an interpretation, let us first see C. George Benello’s interpretation of participatory democracy as “a good society” with “two dimension”: “the requirement that everyone be capable of participating in decisions, and the requirement that the participation be continuous and significant, not just a process of voting once a year tweedledum or tweedledee.” (Benello, 1969:407) These two dimensions seem to be exactly the “two central aims” of the participatory democracy stated in the “Port Huron Statement” in reverse order. For only when “society” is “organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for

30 According to Edward J. Bacciocco, Jr., the concept of participatory democracy originated with Robert Moses and the original SNCC field workers laboring with rural Mississippi Negroes in 1961. SDS then seized the concept, and coined the term, and developed the theory, which provided the intellectual guideline for its community. Organizing projects and was used subsequently as a yardstick to evaluate the democratic authenticity of economic and political institutions in the United States.(Bacciocco, 1974, pp.122-23).

their own common participation,” “everyone” is “capable of participating in decisions”, and only when “the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life,” that “participation” can be seen as being “continuous and significant.” If these two aims are attained, ultra-Jeffersonian complete equality (legal, political, social, and economic equality) can also be achieved sooner equality (legal, political, social, and economic equality) can be said to be SDS’s ideal means to realize ultra-Jeffersonian end of democracy.

3.SDS’s Ultra-Jeffersonian Use of or Comprehensive Applicability of Participatory Democracy in Every Sphere of Human Life

How, then, should SDS use participatory democracy to realize its ultra-Jeffersonian end of democracy? According to the “port Huron Statement,” SDS should use participatory democracy in every sphere of human life (not mere political sphere) in accordance with the following basic principles:

In a participatory democracy, the political life would be based in several root principles:

that decision-making of basic social consequence be carried on by public groups;

that politics be seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relations;

that politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life;

that the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution; it should provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration; opposing view should be organized so as to illuminate choices and facilitate the attainment of goals; channels should be commonly available to relate men to knowledge and to power so that private problems-form bad recreation facilities to personal alienation-are formulated as general issues.

The economic sphere would have as its basis the principles:

that work should involve incentives worthier than money or survival. It should be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; self-directed, not manipulated, encouraging independence, a respect for others, a sense of dignity and a willingness to accept social responsibility, since it is this experience that has crucial influence on habits, perceptions and individual ethics;

that the economic experience is to personally decide that the individual must share in its full determination;

that the economy itself is of such social importance that its major resources and means of production should be opened to democratic participation and subject to democratic social regulation.

Like the political and economic ones, major social institutions-cultural, education, rehabilitative, and others-should be generally organized with the well-being and dignity of man as the essential measure of success. (SDS, 1969:167-68)

Although the last point is not elaborated, it is by no means less important than the other points. It can even be considered to be the central point of SDS's participatory democracy as a comprehensive social system which can operate in all kinds of small community in which every individual can participate independently to decide "the quality and direction of his life" so that human "well-being" is satisfied and human "dignity" is respected. This kind of participatory democracy was interpreted by Richard Flacks, and SDS leader, as a serious extension of citizenship beyond the conventional political sphere to all institutions:

The most frequently heard used for defining participatory democracy is that "men must share in the decision which affect their lives." In other words, participatory democrats take very seriously a vision of man as citizen; and by taking seriously such a vision, they seek to extend the conception of citizenship beyond the conventional political sphere to all institutions. Other ways of stating the core values are to assert the following: each man has responsibility for the action of the institutions in which he is imbedded; all authority ought to be responsible to those "under" it; each man can and should be a center of power and initiative in society. (Flacks, 1971:27)

The comprehensive applicability of participatory democracy was also stressed by Massimo Teodore, who saw it as an enlargement of the old Jeffersonian concept of self-government.

It [participatory democracy] means making it possible at all levels to divide the power to make decisions for and have control over social, economic, and political institutions, among the people who participate in them. Thus, the poor themselves must administer the welfare system; the giant corporations must be responsible to workers and consumers; the mass media must serve all those who

want to use them; political candidates must get their financial support from the public; blacks must have access to the means for self-government; students and professors must have the right to determine academic programs; in a word, the citizen must be able to act as the subject of the social contract which binds him to society, and man must have the power to realize fully his own potential.

Participatory democracy then seems, in its application, to correspond to the old concept of self-government, enlarged to take in every expression of communal life, in all its organized moments. (Teodori, ed, 1969:50)

4.A Critique of SDS's Ultra-Jeffersonian participatory Democracy for being Too Extreme

But Hal Draper, an influential political militant and social critic, criticized “participatory democracy,” the SDS’s most successful phrase,” for being too extreme (ultra-Jeffersonian):

My difficulty is that I do not have the least idea what it means. I was confused enough when I heard it meant rejection of representative democracy, or else a ‘consensus’ form of meeting (one of the most inherently anti-democratic devices I know, by the way). Things were worse when Staughton Lynd explained in Dissent that it means the dual-power institution idea, among other things. When I found out from Sid Lens, in Liberation, that “participative democracy”…… does not necessarily entail elections, I decided to go back to old-fashioned democratic democracy. I mean the “old-leftist” conception of socialist democracy in and unconstrainedly, from the bottom up, in political and social decision-making and in the immediate appointing and firing of decision-makers, through free organizations, elections, trade unions, demonstrations and hell-raising. (Draper, 1972:15)

Also in the view of Lyman Tower Sargent, the author of *New Left Thought*, SDS New Left ideal of participatory was so radical (ultra-Jeffersonian) as to replace representative democracy:

The basic characteristics of participatory democracy are found in the “Port Huron Statement” of 1962…… Under our current system of government an individual is represented in the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of government by another individual. Participatory democracy…… would replace this system with one in which each individual would represent himself and no

one else……(Sargent, 1972:99)

5. An Imagination of the Process of making Decisions, Enforcing Decisions, and Adjudicating Disputes in a Contemporary Small Community of a Commune, Showing the Essential Conditions for the Successful Operation of the New Left Participatory Democracy

For Sargent, however, the “Port Huron Statement” was “not complete enough for a thorough understanding” of the New Left Ideal of unqualified participatory democracy. For such an understanding he led us to an imagination of the process of making decisions, enforcing decision, and adjudicating disputes in a contemporary small community of a commune:

In the evening, after the work of the day is finished, the members of the commune come together to discuss the affairs of the commune. In this meeting, in which everyone participates with an equal voice, all the decisions are made that affect the commune members. Of course the workings of such a formulation would be much more complicated in a larger society, but the basic idea can best be seen in the context of a small community.

Participatory democracy is used not only for making decisions, but also for enforcing decisions, and for adjudicating disputes. If necessary, the entire community acts to enforce the decisions, but the burden of obedience is left on the individual. Since each individual participates in making the decision, it is his decision and, therefore, it is expected that each individual will simply accept the decision and not require external pressure. But if external pressure is necessary, it is provided by the community as a whole. At the same time, if an individual is unwilling to follow the decision, it is likely that the commune would reconsider it first with the full participation of the recalcitrant member who would then be able to explain his position and attempt to gain community support for a change. It is assumed that disputes would not arise after decisions had been made through the process of participatory democracy. And since everyone participates in making decisions, each individual will be deeply concerned and intimated involved in attempting to resolve any dispute. In a closely-knit community, ties of friendship and love should smooth over most dispute. But if the dispute is not smoothed over by discussion within the community combined with the ties of friendship and love, it will probably be assumed that the community made an error in the original decision. (Sargent, 1972:99-100)

On the basis of the above imagination of a functioning commune opening in accordance with participatory democracy, Sargent redefined the New Left participatory democracy and pointed out the essential conditions for its successful operation:

It shows participatory democracy basically as a system by which everyone in a group participates directly in making the decisions that affect their lives, in enforcing such decisions, and in adjudicating disputes. Also, it can be seen that adequate functioning of the community system. It should be clear that community and participatory democracy also depend upon equality and liberty to function adequately. For participatory democracy and community to work, each individual must feel himself to be equal to every other individual within the community and free to express himself or herself. A community cannot function unless all individuals in it feel equal and free to express themselves. (Sargent, 1972:100)

6. Twofold Significance of SDS's Unqualified Participatory Democracy for New Left Groups and Its Being a "Truly Democratic" Alternative to a "Pseudo-Democratic" System in Contemporary America

From the viewpoint of Sargent, the significance of SDS's unqualified participatory democracy was twofold: (1) It is a basic political goal of all New Left groups, and (2) it is a principle of organization within most New Left groups." (Sargent, 1972, p.97) In Sargent's view, both as a basic goal and as a current principle of organization the New Left participatory democracy was seen as: "1. The basic method of decision making. 2. The means of political organization within groups and communities. 3. A protection for individual and community equality and liberty. 4. Part of the process of the search for the authentic self." (Sargent, 1972:97)

Unqualified participatory democracy has often been thought of as the most original contribution of the New Left to political thought, but, in the eyes of Sargent, it was not truly original because a number of American writers of previous centuries had the same idea.³¹ Nevertheless, Sargent saw "Power to the People" as being the "basic idea behind participatory democracy" which was "an axiom of New Left thought" and which was "not based upon any other presupposition about the value of power to the people," but was "based primarily on the acknowledgment that the present system does not work as it should." (Sargent, 1972:100) Indeed, as we have

³¹ Sargent reminded us of a recent collection on participatory democracy whose editors included a number of articles from American writers of previous centuries. That collection is Terrence E. Cook and Patrick M. M. M

noted above, SDS proposed participatory democracy as a “truly democratic” alternative to what it saw as a pseudo-democratic system on contemporary America through an ultra-Jeffersonian glass of ideal democracy and saw a pseudo-democratic picture, SDS’s critique of the realities of cotemporary American democracy was based on such a picture. It is to SDS’s ultra-Jeffersonian critique of contemporary American democracy both in general and in particular that we shall turn.

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「學生民主會」極端傑佛遜式新左派 民主理想之根源

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本文為關於早期美國新左派與美國民主傳統之關係的一系列論文之第六篇。本篇研討「學生民主會」極端傑佛遜式民主理想在美國民主理想傳統中之極端傑佛遜根源。全文分成五部分，第一部份一開始便視傑佛遜之參與民主理想為可行的理想而非不可行的空想，因它強調小社區的直接民主，但並未拒絕大社區的代議民主。這就是傑氏分權化的共和國分級制，其所強調者為區級的基本共和國。人民在其中直接參與決定日常社區生活的方向。此外，第一部份尚討論作為傑氏參與民主成功運作所賴的基本條件之鄉村生活方式。

本文第二部份涉及傑氏參與民主理想與美國民主傳統的發展愈來愈不相關之事實。這部份之焦點在於檢討阿倫史密斯所著「美國政府之精神」一書。檢討結果發現該書所敘述的美國反地方民主之反傑佛遜傳統（即聯邦政府一直支配州政府，而州政府一直支配市政府）似屬正確，但其用反傑佛遜陰謀（少數有產階級為了犧牲多數無產人民之公益以維護其利益而對民主之刻意壓制）以辯解主張擴大中央政府之反傑佛遜主義者戰勝主張維護地方自治之傑佛遜主義者，則似錯誤。

本文第三部份討論實踐中的有限參與民主之微傑佛遜傳統。所謂微傑佛遜乃指傑佛遜的有限參與民主在美國民主政治史上很少實踐過。換言之，對於美國民主史上的非／反傑佛遜民主傳統而言，只有兩次例外可被視為小規模的實微傑佛遜的參與民主理想。第一是民粹與進步主義表現在直接民主（直接初選，創制及複決權）上的改革，其目的為使多數人的公意高於少數人的私權，第二是新英格蘭各州的市鎮議會。本文第四部份所討論者則為主要在美國知識界流行的觀念上的無限參與民主之極端傑佛遜傳統。這傳統包括主張以各種小社區為民主參與最佳單位之論點，將參與民主轉變成絕對民主的自由意志論者所主張的無限及完全參與民主，及林肯著名的「民有、民治、民享」格言。

本文最後部份轉向「學生民主會」在其創建文獻中所陳述的自己的極端傑佛遜式新左派無限參與民主的理想。這理想所表達的重點有二：其一，為該會對

其所發現之其所信奉之純傑佛遜—林肯美國民主理想之虛偽之抗議，其二為該會對真正取代美國民主的虛偽傑佛遜真象之新象之追求。對「學生民主會」極端傑佛遜式新左派民主理想之分析是依照其所界定之「人類、人際關係及社會體系」而為之。前兩者涉及其民主之理想目的，最後者涉及其民主之理想方法。分析之重點在於「學生民主會」稱為「個人參與民主」之社會體系。它能無限制用於人類生活之每一領域。因此「學生民主會」之參與民主可被視為極端傑佛遜式無限參與民主，其目的為在各種小社區中作決定、執行決定及裁決爭端各方面取代代議民主。