

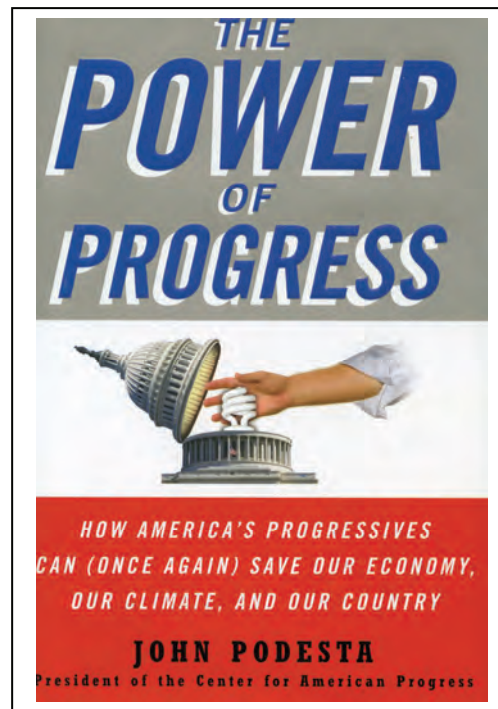
# Elena Kagan, Socialism and the Progressive Movement

By Cliff Kincaid

Some conservatives are concerned about Elena Kagan's "Final Conflict" thesis on socialism, written in 1981 when she was 21 years old. Professor Harvey Klehr, an expert on the socialist and communist movements, told me that while he sensed "a lurking sympathy" in the document for the left-wing of the Socialist Party, he didn't find a "red flag" that would derail her nomination. Kagan's thesis covered socialism in New York City from 1900-1933.

A far more interesting topic is how Kagan, President Obama, and her backers at the George Soros-funded Center for American Progress (CAP) view socialism after 1933. If this became a subject of a congressional hearing, the findings would shock the American people. As we have seen with Van Jones, who has been rehired by CAP, it is today fashionable in left-wing or "progressive" circles to be a communist revolutionary. He only resigned his White House job after the scrutiny into his Marxist background was threatening to implicate Obama and Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett in his hiring.

In analyzing the more recent history of socialism, a good place to start is Henry Wallace's Third Party movement in 1948, the Progressive Party. Wallace was not an insignificant figure, having been vice president in Franklin Roosevelt's third term.



Herbert Romerstein, the former congressional investigator who has written several books about the communist movement, points out that while Wallace wasn't a communist, the party was under Communist Party USA (CPUSA) control. "The Communists even reassigned some of their members from Soviet espionage to run the Progressive Party," he says. The CPUSA was funded by Moscow and was so obedient to the Soviet line that it backed the Hitler–Stalin pact.

Picking up where Kagan's thesis leaves off, Romerstein notes that Earl Browder, who headed the Communist Party in the 1930s until 1945, had boasted in 1960 about the success of the communists under his leadership. Browder had said:

"Entering the 1930's as a small ultra-left sect of some 7,000 members, remnant of the fratricidal factional struggle of the 1920's that had wiped out the old 'left wing' of American socialism, the CP rose to become a national political influence far beyond its numbers (at its height it never exceeded 100,000 members), on a scale never before reached by a socialist movement claiming the Marxist tradition. It became a practical power in organized labour, its influence became strong in some state organizations of the Democratic Party (even dominant in a few for some years), and even some Republicans solicited its support. It guided the anti-Hitler movement of the American League for Peace and Democracy that united a cross-section of some five million organized Americans (a list of its sponsors and speakers would include almost a majority of Roosevelt's Cabinet, the most prominent intellectuals, judges of all grades up to State Supreme Courts, church leaders, labour leaders, etc.). Right-wing intellectuals complained that it exercised an effective veto in almost all publishing houses against their books, and it is at least certain that those right-wingers had extreme difficulty getting published."

In this context, a far more questionable treatment of the socialist or "progressive" movement can be found in a lengthy report issued by the Center for American Progress entitled "The Progressive Intellectual Tradition in America."

Curiously, it ignores Henry Wallace and his communist-dominated Progressive Party.

I asked John Halpin, who wrote much of the CAP report and also co-authored *The Power of Progress* with John Podesta, CAP president, about this omission. He replied:

"Henry Wallace received fewer votes than Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond in 1948 and carried no states. Nearly all progressive and liberal support went to Harry Truman. Wallace was a decent man and his work on agriculture and his stands on ending segregation and fighting for racial equality were admirable. However, because of his foreign policy stands and his naïve approach to Communist influence in the party, most of the major progressive and liberal voices of the time—including Eleanor Roosevelt, John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Reinhold

Niebuhr—gathered within Americans for Democratic Action, an explicitly anti-Communist, pro-civil rights organization. Long term, Wallace's 1948 campaign had no real impact on progressives.”

But while the Dixiecrats faded from the scene, the “progressives” did not. This is a critical point. Indeed, CAP claims to be the inheritor of the “progressive” tradition.

Halpin's reference to Wallace's “naïve approach to Communist influence in the party” suggests recognition that communism was and is a danger and that Wallace was not sufficiently alert to this problem. But is this the case with the modern-day progressive movement? CAP's employment of Van Jones suggests it is not.

**The non-communists like Wallace who tolerated communists became known as “fellow travelers.” The Communists used such people to influence non-communist Americans in the trade union movement and the Democratic Party.**

Romerstein notes, “Two secret Communist Party members became Democratic members of the United States Congress. They were John Bernard from Minnesota and Hugh DeLacy from Washington State. A ‘friend of the Party’ was Vito Marcantonio, who was elected to Congress first as a Republican, then as a Democrat, and finally as a candidate of the Communist Party controlled American Labor Party in New York.”

Bringing the history of socialism and communism up to the present time, Romerstein has explained how the “New Left” of the 1960s and 70s included Communists involved in such groups as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and its terrorist offspring, the Weather Underground. Later, some of these Marxists would emerge in the group called “Progressives for Obama,” which included Carl Davidson, formerly of SDS, and Barbara Ehrenreich and Cornel West of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), whose Chicago branch had backed Obama from the start.

**Van Jones was a key member of another communist group known by the acronym STORM (Standing Together To Organize a Revolutionary Movement) and worked closely with the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS), a Communist Party spin-off group. According to a history of STORM, several members of the group traveled to Cuba in 1999 as part of the notorious Venceremos Brigade, which organized trips to Cuba with the active involvement of Bernardine Dohrn of the Weather Underground.**

Karen Nussbaum, a top official of the AFL-CIO, participated in one of those trips to Cuba. But when I asked her about it, after she made a presentation at the 2009 Campaign for America's Future conference, the leading “progressive” organization in the U.S, she turned and walked away.

As detailed in various congressional hearings and investigations, the Communists also manipulated or controlled the major anti-Vietnam War organizations, using liberals, “progressives” and socialists as fellow travelers.

This was critical because the Communists could not win the war on the battlefield. In addition to media figures such as Walter Cronkite, who turned the enemy's defeat in the 1968 Tet Offensive into a victory for the communists, Hanoi was depending on the anti-war protests to force a U.S. military withdrawal.

The strategy worked.

As leftist Danny Schechter wrote, in the introduction to North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap's book *How We Won the War*, "Throughout the war, the Vietnamese cultivated the active political support of peoples and governments throughout the world... Politically, the Vietnamese always believed in the importance of the anti-war movement... They encouraged it as best they could, knowing that creating a climate of opinion hostile to the war would be one important way of ending it. In the end, their victory was accelerated by Congress' refusal to vote more aid. That refusal was a response to a climate of public opinion which the anti-war movement helped to forge."

**Perhaps the most significant example of the support for the North Vietnamese was displayed by Tom Hayden, who was caught with a June 4, 1968, letter to "Dear Col. Lao," a North Vietnamese official, which ended, "Good fortune! Victory!" Hayden, once married to "Hanoi Jane" Fonda, would later emerge as a member of "Progressives for Obama."**

Meanwhile, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communists reorganized, with many of them establishing the CCDS. Not as widely known, however, is the fact that a secret member of this group was Barbara Lee, who would become a member of the U.S. Congress, leader of the congressional Progressive Caucus and leader of the congressional Black Caucus. She would be honored in 2009 as a "progressive" champion by the Campaign for America's Future.

Van Jones spoke to a 2006 CCDS fundraiser. Another figure active in the CCDS was Harry Hay, the former Communist Party member who founded the gay rights movement.

Interestingly enough, the history of the Progressive Party and its influence would be written by Curtis MacDougall, a professor of journalism at Northwestern University who also wrote, *Interpretative Reporting*, a standard text in journalism schools for more than 50 years. Here, too, we see the continuing influence of the "progressive" movement. Evidence of a left-wing bent among the media elites dates back to Leo Rosten's 1937 study of Washington correspondents.

MacDougall's influence was felt not only on generations of journalists, but on his own son, A. Kent McDougall, who was acknowledged in the 1972 edition of *Interpretative Reporting* as then being with the New York office of the *Wall Street Journal* and lending "valuable assistance" in its preparation. Kent came out openly as a Marxist after working

at the *Journal*, where he said he inserted positive stories about Marxist economists and “the left-wing journalist I.F. Stone.” Stone, it turned out, was a Soviet agent of influence.

MacDougall’s 319-page FBI file, released to this journalist, revealed that he had a close association with the *Chicago Star*, a newspaper controlled by the Communist Party, and many different CPUSA front organizations. But the *Star* connection deserves special comment. The executive editor of the Chicago Star was none other than Frank Marshall Davis, a Communist Party member who would later become President Barack Obama’s childhood mentor in Hawaii. Davis was also active in the Hawaii Democratic Party.

It is significant that MacDougall’s history of the Progressive Party, *Gideon’s Army*, was published by Italian-born American Communist Carl Marzani, who served a prison term for perjury in falsely denying, while employed by the State Department, that he was a Communist Party member. His publishing house, Marzani and Munsell, was subsidized by the Soviet KGB.

CAP’s curious history of the “progressive tradition” ignores all of this and is described by the organization in a self-serving manner this way:

“With the rise of the contemporary progressive movement and the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, there is extensive public interest in better understanding the origins, values, and intellectual strands of progressivism.

“Who were the original progressive thinkers and activists? Where did their ideas come from and what motivated their beliefs and actions? What were their main goals for society and government?”

“The new Progressive Tradition Series from the Center for American Progress traces the development of progressivism as a social and political tradition stretching from the late 19th century reform efforts to the current day. “

The book, *The Power of Progress*, written by Podesta (with John Halpin), is a bit more open and honest. It does mention the communist influence in the Progressive Party, noting the “perceived tolerance of communists within the 1948 Progressive Party” and quoting leading liberals such as Arthur Schlesinger as saying that “the political tolerance of an illiberal creed like communism, coupled with progressives’ earlier isolationism, could not hold during a time of ideological struggle with a spreading Soviet empire.”

**It is important to note, however, that Podesta apparently does not regard communism as an “illiberal creed” and disagrees with Schlesinger’s approach. After all, Podesta strongly defended communist Van Jones, before and after he was fired by the White House.**

Podesta's book goes on to say that "The practical application of many of these fiercely anti-communist positions quickly became problematic for many progressives" because of the loyalty reviews ordered by President Truman and "the overt Red-baiting of Joe McCarthy and [FBI Director J. Edgar] Hoover..." The loyalty reviews were designed to make sure that government employees were loyal Americans and not sympathetic to communism.

Notice how Democratic President Harry Truman seems to have become a villain in the Podesta narrative, sharing equal billing with the "Red-baiting" Senator McCarthy and the FBI director. Such a formulation displays the ideological shift in the Democratic Party.

Podesta notes in matter-of-fact language that "President Truman adopted a strong stance against communist expansion, first with the Truman Doctrine, which offered economic and military support to Greece and Turkey in repelling Soviet ambitions, and shortly thereafter with the Marshall Plan, which provided \$13 billion to help rebuild the economies of Europe and prevent the rise of communism still in ruin from the war."

But Podesta writes critically when he says that the "hard line of liberal thinking" -- that, is, liberal anti-communism -- took the form of "Vowing never to bend to communist aggression anywhere in the world" and President Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam.

Podesta writes this as if he had been willing to consign Vietnam to the communist camp from the beginning. Not only that, but he writes that the liberal anti-communists "firmly rejected the belief that there could be any acceptance of domestic communism within the larger liberal project."

**This, then, is quite explicit and revealing. Judging by Podesta's embrace of communist Van Jones, it is clear that he – and CAP – currently accept communists as being part of "the larger liberal project."**

This helps us explain why a CAP history of the progressive tradition would ignore the lasting influence of Henry Wallace's Progressive Party and how communists continue to work and operate in the "progressive" movement and even influence their hero, President Obama.

Far beyond mere tolerance, however, the communists ran Henry Wallace as the Progressive Party candidate for President in the 1948 presidential election. A 1948 Communist Party election manifesto declared that "...in 1948 we Communists join with millions of other Americans to support the Progressive ticket to help win the peace. The Communist Party will enter its own candidates only in those districts where the people are offered no progressive alternatives to the twin parties of Wall Street."

Romerstein explains:

“In reality, many Communist Party operatives were in control of the Progressive Party. Before it was even formed the Communist Party merged two of its front organizations, the National Citizens Political Action Committee (NC-PAC) and the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts and Sciences, to form the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA), which became the organizing tool for the Wallace campaign.”

Obama Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan’s 1981 thesis at Princeton University was titled “To the Final Conflict: Socialism in New York City, 1900-1933.” However, she wrote that, “In our own times, a coherent socialist movement is nowhere to be found in the United States.” This appears to be a comment on modern-day America, at least as it was in 1981.

Kagan’s verdict, of course, depends on how you define “socialist.” The modern socialist movement calls itself “progressive.”

Kagan’s thesis is well-researched and interesting, but only to a point. Harvey Klehr told me:

“I scanned through Kagan's undergraduate thesis. It is very well-written and well-organized, a very impressive piece of undergraduate writing. It is also pretty sound academically. She considers a variety of answers to the question that has perplexed lots of scholars like myself- and radicals- why no successful radical movement in America? Looking at the fate of the SP [Socialist Party] in NY is an interesting take on the problem and I thought her account was reasonably convincing. She seems to have used appropriate sources- although the footnotes were not attached to the version you sent, so I can't tell exactly which ones she consulted. But it sounds as if she was pretty thorough.

“Although it is not pervasive, I sensed a lurking sympathy for the ‘left-wing’ of the SP, as representing a more militant and pure opposition to the depredations of the manufacturers and the inequities of the system. She acknowledges, however, the faults and flaws of both factions and makes clear that the Communists' own disastrous policies helped destroyed the radical movement in the ILGWU [International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union]. The conclusion bemoans the lack of unity that destroyed this radical movement and hints that that is one of the major factors in the failure of American radicalism. Not surprising coming from a twenty-one year old college student.

“So, I would give her a pretty good grade for an impressive piece of scholarship for an undergrad. And, I don't see anything here like a ‘red flag’ in regard to her present situation.”

It may not be a red flag but anything sympathetic to socialism is objectionable and deserves scrutiny. Let's hope that the scrutiny doesn't end with Kagan.

### **More deserving of scrutiny are Kagan's backers at John Podesta's Center for American Progress.**

The alleged "failure of American radicalism," perhaps appropriate for a paper that covers 1900-1933 and written in 1981, is not so apparent these days.

Consider that, after his resignation from his White House job, Podesta declared that Van Jones "is an exceptional and inspired leader who has fought to bring economic and environmental justice to communities across our country." When Jason Mattera staged an ambush interview and confronted Podesta about hiring Jones, Podesta replied, "Van Jones is trying to make this country a better place."

If Podesta, who ran Obama's transition team with Valeria Jarrett, is serious about these comments, then the "progressive" movement has become something that represents a sharp break with the liberal anti-communist tradition. It is no wonder that CAP doesn't want the public to understand how communists once dominated the "progressive" movement and still manipulate it to this day.

## Center for American Progress



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### Van Jones Rejoins CAP to Lead Green Opportunity Initiative

**February 24, 2010**

Today the Center for American Progress announced that Van Jones is rejoining the center as a Senior Fellow and leader of the Green Opportunity Initiative, a new CAP project.

"We are thrilled that Van Jones is joining us to spearhead a 'green opportunity' agenda to develop the policies and strategies that will ensure the clean-energy future brings not just climate stability and energy security, but also broadly shared economic prosperity," said Kate Gordon, Vice President for Energy Policy at CAP.

In this role, he will work in close coordination with CAP's existing Energy Opportunity team to develop a clearly articulated agenda for expanding investment, innovation, and opportunity through clean energy and environmental restoration—especially for low-income and minority communities. Van will guide CAP in its efforts to advocate for rebuilding the American economy and creating millions of jobs through new investments in clean-energy technologies.

