Tuesday, November 2, 1948, was to have marked the long anticipated climax of the Wallace campaign. Toward this day all the currents of the preceding two years, all the intensive efforts of the past ten months had been directed. For on this election day, the verdict would be rendered on the "fight for peace"—a verdict arrived at through the votes of jurors all across America. This was the day when the supporters of Henry A. Wallace would have their chance to "stand up and be counted."

Actually the day proved something of an anticlimax. Although few Progressives had seriously anticipated victory at this time, they had looked to other goals capable of attainment. Wallace himself had hoped to create the foundations for a new party—a broad liberal party all across the land that would serve the interests of the common man. The less ambitious had hoped at least to create a cohesive force without whose support the Democratic Party would be unable to win a national election. Thus their bargaining power for the adoption of liberal policies would be substantial.

The immediate objective on which all agreed was the turnout of a substantial Wallace-Taylor vote—a protest vote which would serve to indicate the strength of popular sentiment against administration policies, most of all against the negative Truman foreign policy of containment. To attain the minimal
goals, the necessary vote was probably in the vicinity of five to six million—while a ten million turnout would have probably served to insure the party's future as a potent and enduring force. Failing this, if the Progressives' votes spelled the difference between success and defeat for the Democratic Party, their party might then be in possession of a weapon by which to gain policy modifications as the price of rejoining the Democrats.

The verdict of the American people came as a crushing blow to all these hopes. The total popular vote cast for the Wallace-Taylor ticket reached 1,157,140—just past the one million mark. Moreover, the Progressives failed to capture the electoral votes of a single state. Nor did they run second, ahead of either major party, in any of the states. In only three states, New York, Michigan, and Maryland, could they claim credit for having shifted the electoral outcome from Truman-Barkley to Dewey-Warren. Despite the Wallace defection on the left and the Dixiecrat defection on the right, Harry S. Truman had led the Democratic Party to victory and had achieved the impossible—re-election as President of the United States.

The depths of the Progressive defeat extended on down into the senatorial and congressional races as well. Only in the Eighteenth New York District were they able to elect a Member of the House. And here the candidate was the incumbent Vito Marcantonio, elected for a seventh term chiefly on the basis of his personal machine and following. The only other third-party Member in the Eightieth Congress, Representative Leo Isaacson of New York's Twenty-fourth District, was soundly beaten by a coalition candidate. And "Marc" himself had acquired only a plurality—a hint as to the future should Democrats and Republicans decide to unite on a single candidate. The completeness of the defeat was indicated by the fact that in only a few districts—two in New York City and several in California, Texas, and Wisconsin—
did the Progressive congressional candidates run second. And in every such instance, the victorious candidate had either received the nomination of both major parties or was unopposed by a major-party candidate. In both the Fourteenth and Twenty-fourth New York districts, however, the American Labor Party (third-party) votes were greater than those received by the coalition candidate on the Republican line.

The thoroughness of their rejection at the polls left little consolation for the Wallace-ites. Nevertheless, an examination of the election results may shed some light on the more prominent factors involved.

While surprising to Progressive Party followers, the magnitude of the defeat had been indicated earlier by the pollsters. Their sampling had shown a steady trend away from Wallace as the campaign progressed. But even they failed to gauge completely the depths to which the party would actually plummet on election day. From an early high of 11.5 per cent in February, the pollsters had charted a decline of popular sentiment to 7.5 per cent in April, 6 per cent in June and again in August, and to a final 4 per cent in the final days of the campaign. The actual Progressive vote amounted to 2.37 per cent of the total cast.

Voluble in their earlier explanations as to the potential errors in these poll predictions, the Progressives were finally silenced by the returns that came in on election night. In the midst of all the gloomy figures, there was but one relatively bright spot—New York State, where the Wallace-Taylor slate received a total of 509,559 votes on the American Labor Party line. While this marked the highest figure ever polled by an ALP candidate in the Empire State, it represented the result of continued organizational strength, rather than any substantial accretion of new voters. For in the 1944 presidential election, the Roosevelt-Truman ticket had polled some 486,405 votes on the ALP line, and in 1946 the Labor
senatorial candidate, Herbert H. Lehman, had polled 435,846 votes. Percentagewise, the total in New York was less significant, constituting only 8.12 per cent of the state’s vote. However, it was sufficient to transfer the state from the Democratic to the Republican column, the eventual Dewey margin being a scant 60,959 out of some 6 ¼ million votes cast.

By way of contrast, the Progressive performance in some of the states where they had expected to make a creditable showing, such as California and Pennsylvania, was highly disappointing. California had amassed a total of 482,781 petition signatures for the third party but delivered only 190,381 votes, a scant 4.73 per cent of the 4 million-plus turnout. Industrial Pennsylvania, expected to furnish a sizable Wallace following, actually reported 55,161 votes—a paltry 1.47 per cent. Thus the returns went—state after state filing negligible returns for the third-party candidates.

Party officials were quick to raise cries of election fraud. The Progressives had, they claimed, been “counted out.” And, certainly, some of the discrepancies revealed by a comparison of ballot signatures and actual votes indicate some grounds for this suspicion, even discounting the proportion of persons who might have signed nominating petitions without thus committing their votes. For instance, in Georgia the party had obtained 60,000 to 80,000 ballot signatures, according to party officials, yet were credited with only 1,636 votes. In Massachusetts a total of some 110,000 signatures produced only 38,157 votes. North Carolina and West Virginia both indicated a “shrinkage” of about one third between petition and ballot. Missouri, with 53,000 signatures, turned in only 3,998 votes.

The nature of some of the claims was indicated in reports published in the Baltimore Sun. According to Wallace supporters, in Maryland

Votes were being bought right out in the open wherever you looked . . . . In most precincts the standard price was
$10 per vote. Men stood on street corners passing out dollar bills like they were propaganda leaflets or something.

And, even when Progressive voters, resisting all these tempting offers, finally got to the polls to cast their votes for Wallace and Taylor, the party's difficulties were not over, they claimed, as

Whole sheets of registrants' names were temporarily removed from loose-leaf registers. In Northwest Baltimore, Dr. Camper [Progressive Party candidate for Congress] lost thousands of votes through this kind of trick.

Party officials estimated that in Ohio nearly 150,000 ballots were voided as a result of the complicated voting procedure for the "independent" electors listed there.

In Michigan, some substantiation for Progressive complaints was revealed as a result of charges levied by Frank E. Hook, defeated Democratic senatorial candidate. These led to an inquiry by a field staff of the Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. Hook had "reported that he was informed that election inspectors had not counted and he had not been credited with approximately 36,000 votes representing Progressive Party tickets split in his favor." Interviews by the Senate investigators revealed that a large number of election officials were ignorant of the law. Some had failed to count split votes for Hook, as alleged, while others had voided completely every ballot so marked. Third-party instructions had been to split their votes in this manner inasmuch as it had no senatorial candidate of its own. And while this was completely legal, the Progressives found it necessary to call upon roving inspectors to prevent less informed officials from completely voiding ballots so marked. Complete surveillance had been impossible and many valid ballots thus ruled void.
Other Progressive claims, lacking senatorial or other confirmation, involved a district in Missouri. Here, it was alleged by party official Ralph Shikes, an estimated 5,000 votes had been recorded as 500-odd. And according to party counsel John Abt, numerous party workers in many states had reported voting for Wallace and Taylor in their own precincts, only to find that their votes had never been recorded.

In spite of all these allegations, and even if one accepts as valid every Progressive claim—and it appears that many could be substantiated—the maximum estimate of votes lost in this fashion would not total more than 2,000,000. And even were these added to the credited total, the net result—a little over 3,000,000 votes—would still represent a dismal showing, an insignificant percentage of the nearly 49,000,000 votes cast.

Keeping in mind that the total Progressive vote was minute on any absolute scale, there may nevertheless be some significant revelations in a comparative examination. What does a sectional analysis indicate? How did they run in comparison with earlier third parties? A marked geographical pattern emerged in the percentage of state votes cast for the Progressives, even though performance on any absolute scale could be rated as only "fair" in the best of them—New York. (See Table 7, Appendix) In the top quarter there was only one other eastern state—New Jersey. All three West Coast states, however, were included—California, Washington, and Oregon. Three Mountain States—Montana, Nevada, and Idaho—and three north central states—North Dakota, Minnesota, and Michigan—were also near the top. The twelfth and final spot was occupied, surprisingly, by Florida—sole southern state in the upper half of the listing.

At the bottom of the list, the lowest 25 per cent was occupied by four border and five southern states in addition to the three states where the Progressives failed to secure a place on the ballot. Of the eight states just above this quartile, five were southern. Thus the pattern revealed strength—on a
relative basis—in the Far West and Mountain States and weakness in the southern and border states. The latter was hardly surprising in view of both these areas’ recent “orthodoxy” and the Progressive stand on civil rights and segregation. Moreover both anti-Russian feeling and internal anti-Communist hysteria were particularly marked in these same areas at the time.

The failure of the Progressives to capture significant labor or farm support was revealed by the relative showings. Industrial states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were well down the list. And, with the exception of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin—all states historically strong in dissent—none of the rich farm states of the Midwest placed highly.

A comparison of their showing with that of earlier third parties clearly revealed the weakness of the Wallace Progressive Party in failing to capture what might be called the “radical” or “insurgent” areas of America—states traditionally responsive to the call of political dissent. A comparison of the state percentages of total votes cast for minor parties from 1864 to 1936 with similar figures for the Progressives is revealing. (See Table 8, Appendix) Third-party planners had deliberately tried to enlist the support of those areas throughout the campaign. For example, in planning the strategy of the petition drives in Oklahoma, Kansas, and West Virginia, the rural areas of 1890’s Populist support had been carefully charted and effort concentrated in them rather than in the cities which, on the surface, might have been expectedly more receptive to the Wallace appeal.

The Progressives, however, were almost completely unsuccessful in their electoral appeal to the areas of Populist support a half-century earlier. A unique geographical combination of mountain West and agricultural South had made up the 1890’s revolt, the 1892 presidential candidate actually carrying four states, coming within a hair’s breadth in three
others, and receiving at least 10 per cent of the vote in eleven more for a national percentage of 8.63 per cent of the popular vote. But in 1948 the best the Wallace-ites could do in any of these was less than 4 per cent, and their national figure was only 2.3 per cent.

Nor were they any more successful in tapping the traditional discontent of those states where their earlier namesakes had run well. States like Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, the Mountain States, the West Coast trio, and Iowa, where the vision of old "Fighting Bob" La Follette had conjured up a substantial 1924 vote—more than 30 per cent in ten of these—remained unyielding to the crusaders' call. Only in California did their response exceed 4 per cent. And while the La Follette Progressive ticket had carried only one state, it had doubled the Populists' national average, with nearly 17 per cent of the popular vote against Calvin Coolidge and John W. Davis.

Comparison with the Bull Moose venture of Teddy Roosevelt is less valid, since Roosevelt had carried with him much of the organization of a major party. While not a third-party movement, pure and simple, his candidacy received a national popular vote of 29.6 per cent, with only three states where the percentage figure was worse than Wallace's best state—New York.

In making these comparisons, it is necessary to keep in mind that while the Wallace Progressive Party hoped to appeal to the same groups reached by earlier farmer-labor parties, it had come into existence primarily as the result of foreign policy dissent. Unlike the previous ventures, it was not indigenous to the "radical" heart of the American West, but to the "internationalist" East and West Coast. Even in the latter areas, however, its banners were ignored.

But were there any positive correlations with known party strength? The relationship of Progressive Party votes to reported Communist Party followers will be discussed in some
detail in the next chapter, but a statistical comparison is interesting at this point. Ten of the twelve states containing the largest numbers of known Communists were among the top fourth of Progressive Party support at the polls. And the top twelve, which contained 91.23 per cent of known Communist Party members, gave the Progressive Party 86.57 per cent of their popular vote. Caution should be applied in drawing conclusions from this close correspondence, however, since Communist Party membership reflected only one tenth of 1 per cent of the Wallace vote. The presence of both Communist and Progressive strength does not necessarily indicate any causal relationship, but it does suggest that the same conditions, surroundings, or population in these areas furnished atmosphere relatively favorable to both.

Were there any evidences of presidential "coat-tail riding" in the third party? The figures for the congressional and senatorial races are not very revealing, inasmuch as the Wallace Progressives furnished only 9 candidates for the 32 senatorial contests, and only 123 House candidates for the November 2 ballot. Nevertheless, it comes as something of a surprise to note the number of states in which the presidential ticket ran behind the local congressional candidates. There were six such cases—California, New York, Maryland, Oregon, Tennessee, and Virginia. By comparison, however, of the 170 Representatives and 17 Senators elected by the Democrats in 18 states in 1948, only 24 Representatives and 5 Senators failed to run ahead of Truman.

In New York, the difference (with candidates in forty-four of the forty-five districts) was not appreciable (512,148 to 509,559), but in California, where there were Progressive candidates in only fourteen of the twenty-three districts, the congressional aspirants piled up a total of 228,180 votes to only 190,381 for the national ticket. But examination of the situation reveals that in every district where an IPP candidate ran strongly, he was opposed by only one major-party candi-
date. Thus, under California's unique cross-filing statute then in existence, the only opposition in seven districts to the Democratic-Republican nominees was furnished by the Progressive candidates. Consequently, dissidents had to vote the IPP line if they wished to express their disapproval.

Even more significant is the fact that in not a single district were the Progressive Party votes crucial. Their ballots were insufficient to defeat a single Democratic candidate where they offered opposition, just as they failed, where they supported a liberal Democrat, to furnish him with his margin of victory or to prevent his defeat. Thus the threats of "splitting the liberal vote" to elect a conservative candidate proved as unfounded in the congressional races as they did in the big show—with the Progressive vote equally ineffective in both cases.

Little of significance emerged from the results of the senatorial races, save in Virginia where the votes cast for the Progressive candidate for Senate, like those for the nominees for the House, exceeded the votes received by the presidential ticket.

Endless speculation would be possible upon some of the facets thus revealed, or upon other possible conclusions, but eventually one always returns to the starting point—the poor showing made by the party at the polls.

What were some of the reasons that Henry A. Wallace received such an insignificant percentage of the popular vote? The more pertinent causes may be summarized under four broad headings. First, there were the handicaps under which the Wallace Progressive Party was launched and which limited its following at the outset. Second, there were some relatively constant conditions which prevailed throughout the campaign and which prevented the accretion of any large numbers of new supporters. Third, there were the de-
veloping conditions throughout the campaign which caused a considerable decline in numbers as 1948 progressed. Finally, there were other causes which might be classified as contributory rather than critical.

As will be recalled, the Wallace venture was launched without the support of any substantial segment of American labor and with virtually no support from farm groups. Moreover, the basic disagreement leading to the Wallace decision had centered about foreign policy—a situation unique in American history. For the Wallace Progressive Party offered the sole instance in which a new party had been formed on this basis, rather than borne in on some wave of popular discontent with more closely felt domestic problems.

Moreover, the socioeconomic climate into which the infant endeavor was brought was one hardly calculated to make it thrive. Throughout the campaign, three main currents of America remained relatively steady, none of which served to sustain the Wallace endeavor. Quite the contrary.

First there were the conditions of economic prosperity, full employment and high farm prices. Despite the inflation which greatly diminished the purchasing power of the dollar, there was more money in circulation. Of greatest importance to labor, there was work to be had and wages were moving upward even if prices were also moving upward at an even more rapid pace. From the vantage point of the farmer, the world provided a still voracious market, with resultant high prices for expanded production. And for the future there was the promise that price support schemes would never allow agriculture to fall again into the despair of the late 1920’s and early 1930’s.

In short, with factories humming and business good, why risk upsetting the apple cart? Historically, the ranks of the discontented and thus of third-party voters, have always been swollen by periods of economic crisis. Regardless of the
weakness of its footing revealed only a year later, 1948 was
a period of prosperity rather than crisis.
Second, there was the social climate of the times, best de-
scribed as one of postwar reaction and mounting hysteria. The
seemingly inevitable moral letdown was evidenced by in-
creasing crime rates across the nation. Hostile sentiment
was being whipped up by both press and radio against our
recent wartime ally—the Soviet Union. Without attempting
to disentangle economic aspects of governmental control
from totalitarian actions of a one-party dictatorship, the same
Red brush was applied to everything Russian, and "Com-
munist" became the most vituperative of epithets. In such an
atmosphere, as invariably happens, a premium came to be
placed upon conformity—a blind, unreasoning acceptance of
the dogma of the times. One who dared disagree with the
accepted norm became immediately suspect, unless perchance
the witch hunts he proposed were more violent than those al-
ready in effect.
Obviously, such was not a time for dissenters to rally
adherents to a new party—the more so when the party's can-
didates bent over backwards to avoid any appearance of the
intolerance that had become part and parcel of the era. Con-
sequently, adherence to tradition in voting was something
which stamped the citizen as "respectable." Commenting
upon the La Follette Progressive campaign, the Lynds had
observed in Middletown:

In 1924 it was considered such "bad business" to vote for
the third party that no one of the business group confessed
publicly either before or after the election to adherence to
this ticket. "If we could discover the three people who dis-
graced our district by voting for La Follette," declared one
business-class woman vehemently, "we'd certainly make it
hot for them!"
The United States in 1948 was *Middletown* multiplied a thousandfold.

*Finally, the war-fostered interest of the American people in foreign affairs entered a new—a *defensive*—phase. While the traditional isolationism of the Midwest slowly regained strength in some areas, elsewhere the shibboleth became “containment.” Instead of further progress or a positive expansion of democratic ideals, the status quo was now to be preserved against Communist iconoclasts seeking to demolish a structure so laboriously erected and perfected. Acceptance of this doctrine also served to relegate foreign affairs to a position of secondary importance for the average person. Even though it might be “One World,” Greece and Turkey and China were far away, and a show of military might by the admittedly greatest power in the world would keep the Communists “in their place.” Meanwhile, the transition to a peacetime economy at home offered the really pressing problems. All sights were leveled on the maintenance of American productivity, employment and farm prices on the new plateau to which they had climbed in the postwar era. And since the areas of traditional “radicalism” were among the most contented and the least interested in foreign policy, the climate of 1948 America was hardly an ideal one in which to cultivate an internationally-oriented crusade such as that of Henry Wallace.*

*But, in addition to these constants of the year 1948, there were also numerous variables—factors whose alteration with the progress of the campaign contributed to the steady decline in Progressive Party strength.*

*One of the most significant was the “shift to the left” of the Truman administration in domestic policy. By the close of 1947 the Democrats had moved in action, if not in words, far to the right of the Roosevelt New Deal. They now espoused many causes nearly identical with those of the Republican conservatives, such as the administration’s anti-inflation pro-
gram which was, in the words of one high governmental economic analyst, "99 per cent identical with Senator [Robert A.] Taft's proposals for 'voluntary control,' which is no control at all."

Linked to such programs, there came a succession of Truman personal decisions—the reliance upon the generals and the admirals, the appointments of the Pawleys and the Krugs, the removal of the Landises and the Ickes. All these suggested a marked change from the personnel—and also from the outlook—of New Deal days.

With Wallace's campaign attacks upon these administration tendencies there had come a marked reversal. First at the Philadelphia Convention, and at every "whistlestop" thereafter, Harry S. Truman had undertaken a vigorous advocacy of a Fair Deal program, as he attempted to don an outsize Roosevelt-style mantle. A revitalized program had been submitted to a specially summoned session of Congress late in July. When this conservative-dominated body had failed, as anticipated, to adopt the plans, the Truman attack upon the "no-good, do-nothing, Republican-controlled 80th Congress" had begun in earnest. Forgotten in the attack were the President's own actions that had helped scuttle price control in 1946, his 1947 threats to draft striking railroad workers, and his consistent series of "incredible" first-term appointments.

The Democratic National Convention had also marked the onset of a new and vocal attack by the administration against racial segregation and other discriminatory practices. Led by Hubert Humphrey in a spectacular floor fight, a liberal faction had forced the adoption of a strong platform plank supporting such controversial matters as anti-lynch and anti-poll tax legislation and promising a nation-wide fair employment practices act. While the close convention decision had led to the immediate defection of southern delegates who proceeded to form a fourth party—the States' Rights Democrats, or Dixiecrats—it had also had a telling effect on the third party.
this new position cut much of the ground out from under the Progressive Party's "freedom" pledge. Large numbers of Negro voters came to feel that they could accomplish more by working and voting for a Democratic Party which now promised just as much as the third party, and which, in addition, had some chance of being elected to carry out its promises.

Regardless of the absence of action, the words of this new dynamic Presidential attack upon the "vested interests" and upon discriminatory practices brought a last-minute shift of independent voters to the Truman banners—too late, in fact, to be caught by any of the pollsters. Faced with the imminent threat of a Dewey-Republican victory, even Wallace supporters at the last minute held their noses, swallowed the "lesser-evil" doctrine, and voted to re-elect Harry S. Truman.

The story was related in Progressive circles of the girl worker-for-Wallace-and-Taylor who had labored strenuously all through the campaign for the Progressive cause. On election morning, so the tale went, she burst into tears upon returning from casting her own vote. Queried as to the cause of her dejection (the returns were not yet coming in), she replied that after she had entered the booth, pulled the curtain, and was alone with her thoughts of "the little man on the wedding cake"—Tom Dewey in the White House—she simply couldn't pull the Wallace lever but instead had voted for Truman. This episode was undoubtedly repeated many times over on November 2, 1948, with thousands of voters ultimately choosing the "lesser evil." Some of the pollsters, including George Gallup, later voiced their belief that the vast majority of their million-odd "missing Wallace votes" represented last-minute shifts that contributed to the upset victory of the President.

Of at least equal importance with the domestic "thunder-stealing" by the Democrats that undercut the "abundance" promises of the Progressive platform, there were the unfolding events in Europe during 1948 that had vitiated the appeal of
the "peace" plank. The most significant of these had been the Czechoslovakian coup of March, whereby the Communists had gained control of the previously democratic coalition government. This was a shattering blow to those who had hoped that it was possible to permit Communist cooperation and still retain Western-style democracy. To many it was also convincing proof that the Soviet was embarked upon a course of world conquest and that no bridge between East and West was any longer possible.

This fact alone would have been sufficiently damaging to Progressive proposals for United States–Russian negotiations, but in addition Wallace had been caught off base when questioned by reporters. His remarks had seemed to indicate a belief that American intervention had been the fundamental cause—a conclusion highly unacceptable to most observers. The combined effect of both the incident and Wallace's observations had been to reduce the numbers of Progressive followers very sharply at a critical time in the preconvention campaign. Short months after this had come the Berlin Blockade with its continuing reminder throughout the campaign of the intransigence of the Russian leaders for any form of coexistence implicit in the "peace" plank.

A third factor of increasing importance as the campaign progressed was the Communist link attributed to the Progressive Party. Early in the year, Gael Sullivan, at the time acting chairman of the Democratic National Committee, had suggested that the Wallace candidacy would actually help the Democrats, inasmuch as it would unload from their backs the Red label with which the Republicans had so successfully tagged them in the 1946 off-year campaign. This prediction was borne out to no small extent. Few serious and sustained charges of communism were leveled against the Democrats, and most were disregarded. Communism never became a vote-losing issue for the Democrats in 1948, as it did later and as it did for the Progressives in this campaign.
The third-party presidential candidate himself estimated that acceptance of Communist support probably cost his party 3,000,000 votes. But the matter became one of principle from which no retreat was possible, and the Progressives were on the defensive throughout the campaign. They failed to adopt a clear-cut line of counterattack such as that offered by Senator Glen H. Taylor. In his acceptance speech, the vice-presidential candidate had announced:

I am happy to have the support of all those who go along with our program. But just let me say to the Communists so there will be no misunderstanding, my efforts in the future as in the past will be directed toward the goal of making our economy work so well and our way of life so attractive and our people so contented that Communism will never interest more than the infinitesimal fraction of our citizens who adhere to it now.¹

But with the Progressives’ failure to follow up on this approach, the popular impression of the third party as “Red-dominated” continued to grow. By mid-July a majority of Americans (51 per cent) questioned in a public opinion poll “agreed” that “Wallace’s third party is run by Communists.” And while the precise figure might be suspect because of the loaded question, there was little doubt as to the general sentiment revealed.

Regardless of validity, the popular view of the Progressive Party as little more than a Communist front had a damaging effect—on voters and workers alike. Progressives (with a small p) who might otherwise have been attracted to the Wallace camp stayed away, and considerable numbers of those who had gathered later departed—both groups repelled by

¹ Text of Senator Taylor’s remarks published in PM, February 24, 1948. Other journals failed to include this paragraph in their excerpts.
the Red light in which the crusade's banners were bathed as the campaign went on.

The part played by the American press in the fostering of this conception was highly significant. As a member of the New Deal administration, Wallace had always been a leading target for conservative attack. With his candidacy on a third-party ticket, the vilification had assumed unprecedented proportions. Reporters, even some who privately admitted sympathy to the candidate, turned out reams of bitter, sarcastic copy—playing up every remark, every shred of evidence which could be manipulated to prove that the Progressive candidate was (a) a dreamer, a visionary, and an idealist completely devoid of practical knowledge, and (b) a dupe, wittingly or not, of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union, and the Communist Party in the United States. Little acknowledgment was given that this "dreamer" had created fortunes, for others as for himself, through agricultural developments, had served as capable administrator of the largest branch of the peacetime government—the Department of Agriculture—and during his term as Vice President had enlisted notable popular support for the United States throughout the world—particularly in Latin America. Press coverage was instrumental in presenting a pink-hued, vote-costing version of the Philadelphia Convention to the American public. And this was the constant portrayal throughout the campaign to discredit the third party. An adequate method of response was simply not available to the Wallace-ites.

Nor did they benefit in any marked degree from the traditional American sympathy for the underdog. For theirs was indeed a quixotic crusade—a crusade based upon a combination of moral and idealistic principles, rather than upon hope of winning the election. And in 1948 the voters' emotional response was to the battling underdog, and the candidate whose "just plain folks" approach was so clearly genuine,
rather than to the hopeless if intellectual appeal of a Quixote.

Finally there were many minor causes, contributory rather than crucial, which played their part in the small vote received by the Progressives. First there was the organizational failure. The fact that no sound machine was firmly established down to the ward and precinct level was evidenced by the weak showing everywhere except in New York, where such a structure, that of the American Labor Party, had already been built. The areas making relatively better showings were those where relatively stronger organizations had been established, as in Southern California. The other significant organizational flaw was the failure to build a working labor organization—a defect clearly indicated by the weak showing in the industrial states. Second there were the ballot problems already discussed in detail. The two most damaging failures were those in Illinois, which may well have cost the Progressives a quarter of a million votes, and Ohio, where the necessity of marking twenty-five separate X’s on a ballot to vote Progressive was estimated to have taken a toll of 150,000. Finally there was the matter of election frauds, mentioned earlier in the chapter. Difficult to measure with any degree of accuracy, this “counting out” undoubtedly deprived the Wallace ticket of many votes, though hardly the 2,000,000 estimated by party publicist Ralph Shikes.

But what of the impact of this dismal performance? Nothing succeeds like success, and the Progressives had failed to establish even a working basis for the 1952 election. Their failure was not only an immediate one, but it also posed increasing difficulties for the four-year period up to the next presidential contest. Workers who had in so many instances sacrificed time, money, social standing, and even long-held positions had little to look forward to on the basis of the general apathy exhibited their endeavors.

The vote was enough for Senator Glen H. Taylor—sufficient indication of the complete lack of support for both party
and policies. He promptly notified party secretary C. B. Baldwin that it was not his "intention to quit politics," hence he must leave the party. This attitude was typical of many moderates who now departed less formally than did the vice-presidential candidate. And one of the ultimate effects of their departure was to give the extreme leftists increasing control of the organization by default.

Moreover, the small vote achieved by the Progressives' candidates indicated that the administration foreign policy was accepted, if not endorsed, by an overwhelming majority of the American voters. While the interpretation of the election outcome as a "mandate" in favor of the Truman get-tough-with-Russia policy seems unwarranted, the fact that it had failed to arouse significant opposition meant endorsement of a negative sort. If the voters felt any great qualms over the wisdom of President Truman's doctrine abroad, they had been calmed by the tides of economic pressure and the ground swell for conformity at home.

Finally, the fact that the Democrats had gained victory without the Wallace forces meant that the Progressives had failed to gain even a staying power, let alone balance of power. Their unsuccessful quest for votes had openly exposed the weaknesses of their position.

In short, then, Henry Wallace, having taken his "fight for peace" to the highest tribunal of the people, found himself rejected in no uncertain manner. Those willing to "stand up and be counted" had proved disappointingly few.

The defeat at the polls suffered by the Progressive Party on November 2, 1948, was such as to virtually sign its death warrant, barring either of two possible contingencies—a major depression at home or an overwhelming defeat for the containment policy abroad. Regardless of the complex causes, there was little evidence in the election returns of sufficient vitality to allow the Wallace Progressive Party to endure in such a hostile climate.