



Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State

Ralph Nader

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Ralph Nader, one of the most influential Americans of the 20th century, has fought for justice in America for over half a century. He strongly believes that—contrary to conventional political wisdom regarding extreme partisanship—significant change can be accomplished by focusing on issues that most Americans, regardless of political labels, agree are important and need to be addressed. This book is about the emerging political re-alignment that is combining the Left and the Right against corporate tyranny.

One of the most urgent issues of our time is the dominant corporate control of the United States economy and political process. Large segments from the progressive, conservative, and libertarian political camps find themselves aligned on a variety of issues, such as opposing the destruction of civil liberties, the draining corporate welfare state, the expansion of America's aggressive wars, and the growing intensity of Wall Street crimes. All of these issues can be traced back to the growing influence of corporate goliaths and their ability to combine forces with indentured government against the interests of the broader public.

Nader urges Americans to fight back with unlikely allies. He draws on half a century of his own experience working at the grassroots and in Congress and tells of many surprising victories that have united progressive and conservative forces. As a participator and active observer of these budding alliances, he breaks new ground in showing how these coalitions can expand to achieve power on Capitol Hill, in the courts, and in the arena of public opinion. These examples provide a blueprint for how Americans on both sides of the aisle can fight against the corporate agenda, and reclaim their right to consume safe foods and drugs, breathe clean air, become fairly rewarded for their daily work, regain control of taxpayer assets, and obtain greater voice in the decisions that affect them.

This book shows how corporatist strategies of divide-and-rule can be overcome through a united front, in order to enact long overdue changes in our country. Far from espousing “let’s meet half-way” type compromises, Nader argues that it is in the interest of citizens of different political labels to join in the struggle against the corporate state that is ruining the Republic, trampling our constitution, and pushing the American people into the ground.

Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State **Details**

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Beverly says

This is a must read for any who have felt that there was no hope for future changes to the good for our country. Nader points out the convergence over certain issues that are shared across ideological boundaries. There is a path that he describe that holds hope for a change from the stasis of our current government to proceed cooperatively. Read and be recharged in new but old ways to work in the political climate that now exists.

Derek Postlewaite says

Philosophically, this is one of the deepest books by Nader that I have read. The overall argument or thesis of the book is convincing: the Left & Right would be more effective if they were to converge and join forces, and despite what most would call obvious conflicts of interest, there are plenty of areas where both sides share common ground.

Nader presents convergence as the most plausible and effective way forward. After reading this book, I'd have to agree.

John says

Great work, Ralph delivers plain English facts, stories and anecdotes to engage the reader. The Thomas Paine of our time. Must read

Jennifer Chin says

Great book describing how in many ways we all want some of the same things, no matter the label we attach to ourselves. No one would say clean water to drink isn't important, nor public safety from goods known by the maker to be defective. I think all elected officials should read this book... our infrastructure needs agreement and action from our leaders, not more red herring arguments about social issues and personal pride.

Kyle says

I thought it was extremely thought provoking. Political convergence is exactly what this country needs at the moment. There's something for everyone in this book no matter what your political orientation is. Nader blends grounded reality, philosophy, and history to try and show that our two party duopoly is drifting towards an abstract, polarized, and detached form of politics, functioning to mystify the monopolistic

violence of the corporate state. I especially think the last 3-4 chapters are the most important because he sheds light on many populist conservatives that are often marginalized in the mainstream media who have "old school" conservative values such as a truly limited government that protects the individual entrepreneur, small businesses, civil rights, and economic freedom and justice—all under attack by monopolistic corporations.

Kim Olson says

Ralph Nader has probably pushed through more pieces of important federal legislation than most members of Congress (a low bar these days, I know). He's fiercely passionate about the issues he works on, but that only gets you so far. Nader is also a savvy strategist who knows how to start building consensus, something that's become increasingly difficult to do in the current my-way-or-the-highway political climate.

But a modern left-right alliance is perfectly possible, he argues, and it's the only way to rein in the corporate plutocracy that is stomping all over our democracy. Addressing reasonable people on the left and right, Nader lays out a number of big issues where common ground can be found, with detailed reasoning. He acknowledges some of the challenges, and usually offers suggestions for leaping those hurdles. And he doesn't give either side a pass. He castigates both for their missteps and hypocrisies. Ralph Nader is, as ever, a straight-shooter.

For the skeptics, he shows that cooperation between left and right—even now—is more common than the media and many politicians would have us believe, and gives specific examples.

A well-conceived guide for moving forward, from someone who's been in the trenches for decades.

Jill says

God bless Ralph Nader. This was really a little wonky for me, but Nader's ideas of convergence between the left and the right on issues they can agree upon (and yes, there are such issues despite what the media tries to tell us) are an ideal to aspire to.

Maureen O'Brien O'Reilly says

though it sure looks today like the right and left are far away and apart.... the needs and dreams of people are the same, as is our foe, the corporate state. encouraging.

Stephen says

George Carlin grouched that when he heard the word bipartisanship, he knew a larger than usual deception was in the works. Ralph Nader's *Unstoppable* offers a different kind of bipartisanship -- cooperation, not conspiracy. Written primarily to a progressive audience, Nader draws on his reading of Russell Kirk and F.A. Hayek to share the good news: there are people who share the similar values in both political wings, and plenty of room to work together against a common enemy. What common enemy? The crony-capitalist state, the nemesis of both progressives who fear the power of modern-day robber barons, and of libertarians and conservatives who value free markets, the rule of law, and civic order.

Nader opens *Unstoppable* with a victory several decades old: the termination of a particular nuclear project based on an alliance between progressive environmentalists and fiscal conservatives. Although joining forces with conservatives was initially a pragmatic move, in the decades that followed, Nader familiarized himself with both conservative and libertarian literature. Nader deserves kudos, for while it's not unusual for those passionate about politics to learn their opponents' arguments merely to demonstrate to them while they are wrong, Nader seems to have gained a genuine sense of empathy for those on the other side. Humanistic concern runs through each political camp considered here, a commonality that can be the basis of cooperative action. What most progressives think of as conservatism, Nader writes, is a new thing, the product of decades of slow corporate corruption of the political state. Its subsidies to multinationals, the benefaction rendered by regulations that smother competition, conserve nothing -- and nor do they promote liberty. Nader may still disagree those on the right, but underneath the ideology, he writes, we are still human beings who, when confronted with abuses, want to help one another.

The alliances that can be created vary. Progressivism's opponents may agree on opposing the State's growing activity in everyday life, but they don't agree with one another. Take the environment: some of the United States' most sweeping conservationist legislation was enacted by presidents like Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon, and environmentalism lends itself well to the language of conservatism; think 'stewardship'. Progressive horror at the inroads consumerism is making in the lives of children can find kindred spirits in the ranks of social conservatives, especially the religious who fear their children becoming selfish and materialistic. Libertarians who swear more by the market than moral order may object to progressive-conservatives limiting choice by barring certain kinds of advertising, for instance, but when it comes to forswearing money given to corporations they're stalwart allies. Another area of progressive-libertarian camaraderie is ending the drug war, which even Old Right types could be convinced to join if shown how the war has completely destroyed civil law enforcement in favor of pseudo-military police enforcement. Free trade is a particularly thorny issue: libertarians may be for it, and paleo-conservatives against it, but there's a fuzzy thin line between protectionism (which progressives might back) and cronyism.

In the latter half of his book, Nader puts forth a list of twenty-five issues that progressives can work with either libertarians or paleo- and populist conservatives on, or both. Some of them involve the federal government doing more, which I don't think will sell well in allying with groups who view federal overreach as the entire point of opposition. It's a let's-get-the-Wehrmacht-out-of-Paris-before-we-strengthen-it-against-Stalin situation. Others involve a heart dose of localism, like promoting 'community self reliance', and distributive electrical grids. At one point Nader quoted *Who Owns America?*, the classic agrarian-distributist critique of the then-nascent plutocracy, and I may have swooned. Considering that two of the major contenders for the presidency have nebulous connections to their respective parties -- the independent socialist Sanders and the populist Trump -- Americans' frustration with the reigning RepubliCrat scheme seems ripe for this kind of cooperation. I only wish Nader had put more emphasis on local cooperation, which is further removed from ideology, and more motivated by having to work with the facts at hand. Non-

progressives will find Nader's repeated assertion that progressives have less interest in ideology than facts to be dubious, and for the record I think that comes a little too close to holding that the ends are more important than the means. It's not enough to take steps to take care of what ails us: we should have some idea of where we are going. If we allow power to accrete in the name of "doing something", then we'll simply pave the way for future abuses.

Quarrels withstanding I found Unstoppable to be an immensely heartening book, a reassuring dose of civility and cooperation. I think if more Americans read it -- progressives, liberals, conservatives, and even those power-enabling rascals in the middle, the liberals and neocons, we might see each other more as people with genuine convictions, and not merely wrongheaded enemies who need to be defeated and driven from the field. When the talking heads on TV, both the announcers and the candidates, drive one to despair, consider Nader's humane rebuttal. Genuine hope for America may not be forlorn.

(And where else are you going to find a book with a Green party progressive hailing decentralism and lamenting over the problems of regulatory capture and bureaucratic quagmire?)

Related:

Crunchy Cons, Rob Dreher

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What's Wrong with the World?, G.K. Chesterton

We Who Dared Say no to War, ed. Murray Polner and Tom Woods. (Men of the left and right, respectively.)

Erich Wendt says

As a reviewer noted, very wonky. Interesting ideas.

Trey Mustian says

An interesting book especially given the recent political developments in this country. Nader argues that liberals and conservatives actually have many ideals and goals in common and that they should "converge" to effect change. He describes how he believes this can happen. I hope he is right.

Michele says

Absolutely loved this book! Nader understands our government and knows many of the movers and shakers in both parties. The point of this book is to move beyond party politics, especially given the inability of our two party system to perform their duties, efficiently and effectively. Ralph encourages citizens to look beyond all of the media hype and to think about issues as they stand, independent of party politics.

Fiddlinmike says

I was attracted to the idea of finding common ground between right and left as the basis for political change,

and I'll give credit to Nader for the attempt.

On occasion Nader notes an equal share of blame for "corporatism" between right and left, but he just can't resist placing most of the blame for every ill in the world on conservatives. He cherry picks his historical "facts" and quotes from noted conservative thinkers, showing them as "reasonable" but only so he can attack the unreasonableness of current-day conservatives (who are clearly bought by corporations). To Nader, all conservatives are on the take, and liberals must be careful not to fall into the same trap. If America can convince the conservatives to be reasonable, like their forefathers, then the right/left alliance would be good to go (liberals are already reasonable because they don't rely on 18th century philosophers or have such guiding philosophy, they just go with what they observe empirically 'on the ground.')

Come on, Ralph. There's no difference between the set of conservative or liberal politicians when it comes to power, ego, and reliance on special interests. Some are honorable, some are skunks. And not EVERY corporation in the world is greedy and evil. There is no one "corporate interest" steering everything. Corporations often work at cross purposes. And what about the many money-spreading organizations that are technically not "corporations" like the NRA, or AARP, or various Union, Religious or Environmental groups? These can be just as corrupting as corporations. I would have found Nader's arguments more compelling had he presented them with more objectivity. I think he's so intensely focused outside of the book on bashing "corporations" and "conservatives" that he has a hard time escaping his bias inside the book - to the detriment of his overall desire for common ground.

At the end of the day, Ralph's big idea is to recruit a few billionaires to fund a right/left groundswell. He even includes a letter to them in a chapter titled "Dear Billionaire" (or something like that). Once the billionaires get things rolling, we'll presumably pass a bunch of good laws, with "good" politicians who are free of the corporations. Then, power will be returned to the people. Okay, Ralph. Thanks, man.

Chris Chester says

I'm too young to have been a Nader voter back in 2000, but having read this short political screed by the former Green Party nom, I might have been.

Respected as he is by those on both the Left and the Right, Ralph Nader attempts to make the case that most politically-active Americans have strong areas of convergence when it comes to restraining and dismantling the corporate state. Instead of focusing on the social issues that are used to divide and incite the population every election cycle, he lays out the areas where most of us agree:

- * Auditing the Department of Defense
- * End corporate welfare
- * Enact tax reform
- * Break up "too big to fail" banks
- * Expand contributions to charity
- * Expand direct democracy
- * Encourage patronage of community-rooted businesses

...and probably 20 more.

And he's right! On many of these issues, people on both sides of the political spectrum would agree, though I

think he does overstate the conservative case for environmentalism — he must not speak to the same armchair conservatives that I do, the Baby Boomer types in strong denial about their contributions to the destruction of their ecological inheritance. But that's a digression.

Nader spends a lot of energy on conservatives, pointing out areas where thought leaders champion these areas of convergence. And I think that's a good thing, because the Fox News-esque caricature of the conservative has become a non-starter to dialogue for at least the last 20 years. Similarly, he takes down liberals for overlooking moldy areas in their own ideological backyard, like labor union corruption and the breathless defense of any and all entitlement programs.

The book is measured and thoughtful, and is likely to ring true in a lot of ways to thoughtful people on whatever part of the political spectrum one falls. But what prevents this book from being a real must-read on political convergence is his prescription for the future.

Some of them are just highly unlikely, like the enactment of a transaction tax on Wall Street transactions to pay for a Wall Street watchdog agency. We can all ride our flying pigs to Washington to see that one enacted. But far and away the most glaring is his repeated appeals to billionaires to help fund one or another of his policy ideas. The book even finishes with a letter to billionaires to come and fund efforts to advance convergence.

It reads to me like an appeal for a real-life deus ex machina. I had a hard time deciding whether such a point was infuriating or just sad. It certainly undermines the mobilization potential of the book, if the best we can do is appeal to our betters to change things for us. It's an excuse for inaction, and a sorry punctuation mark to an otherwise optimistic book.

J.M. says

"Wonky" is the word. Fact-based, optimism-tainted. It's hard to disagree with Ol Ralph but very easy to differ. He rails against the corporate state we find ourselves in, points to feasible ways out and areas of what should be easy accord among liberals and con-- libs and cons-- LC's. He smashes the terms together to suggest there will be plenty of people in the middle, in a political union. I'm just much more pessimistic. Ralph HAS to be optimistic to do what he does. Especially when he rails against today's youth and their immersion in "screens" instead of one another. Well, sorry Ralph, we are only the creatures we evolved to be. Idealists, optimists, by their nature, deny or reject human nature. This is further evidence of the futility of hope. Bright-side documentation of disaster. Is there anything in human history to suggest that we could universally agree on a course of action? Combat something as grim and long-term as climate change? We are a frail, fractious species and there are simply more important issues than our political gridlock.

Oddly enough my dad read this, and he doesn't read anything.
