

The Children's Crusade: Creating the Student Voting Bloc Through McCarthy's 1968 Campaign

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The paper seeks to document the role of student campaigners in Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign through the use of newspaper coverage and memoirs. In so doing it seeks to develop a moment in which the student voting bloc became a powerful force in American politics.

The year 1968 was a tumultuous turning point in American history: while college campuses and black neighborhoods alike convulsed with violent protests, the country lost two of its great leaders to assassin's bullets and the Democratic Party splintered over American involvement in Vietnam. Through the deep divisions of the Democratic Party and the presidential election that ultimately brought Richard Nixon to power, many historians have argued that the liberal consensus that was reached after the Second World War was destroyed.¹ No longer was Washington infected with the optimism that government could create social justice if it only enacted the right policies, the way it was under President Kennedy and during the early years of the Johnson administration. People became mistrustful of the government, especially after its actions in Vietnam.² 1968 was not, however, the end of all things good in American politics. Many groups became involved in politics who had previously been apathetic, especially the young. College campuses became hotspots of political activity, especially antiwar protests. However, the popular image of the longhaired, pot-smoking anarchist was not the only kind of student active during this year. Senator Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign allowed many more moderate students to become politically active. Examining the role these students played in McCarthy's campaign will provide a more complete view of the political spectrum of student activism during this time. Thanks to outlets like the McCarthy campaign, student activism was not just a broadening of extreme factions but instead took hold all along the political spectrum. Importantly, examining McCarthy's campaign shows that 1968 was not an exception to the rule of student apathy but instead marked a qualitative shift toward a more active younger generation.

The Vietnam War was instrumental both in ending the liberal consensus and in galvanizing the younger generation. The war deeply divided society on almost all levels, but its effect on the Democratic Party helped seal their loss of the 1968 election and paved the way for a conservative resurgence to begin under Richard Nixon. Senator Eugene McCarthy from Minnesota decided to challenge President Johnson as an antiwar candidate, hoping to show enough support for an antiwar stance to encourage the President to change his policies in Vietnam. Instead, his success in the primaries helped convince Johnson not to seek a second term and threw the Party into indecision and near-chaos as they tried to choose a nominee. The Democrats were torn between the grassroots movement of McCarthy and the back-room machines that helped nominate Hubert Humphrey. In the end, the machines prevailed, but they left in their wake a deeply divided party in serious need of reform.

Given their increasing frustration with the current system, many groups took the opportunity to express their discontent through popular protest. College students in particular sought empowerment by protesting the issues that took autonomy away from them: although these students could not vote, they were still subject to being drafted to fight in what many saw as an unjust war.³ Because of this disenfranchisement, not all students were pleased with McCarthy's campaign. Many student radicals actually resented McCarthy for stealing students that might have otherwise populated their protests when these students decided to campaign for McCarthy instead. Radicals also saw McCarthy as a naïve Cold War reformer who did not share their fervent belief in the necessity of a completely new political and societal system.⁴ Thus, as a counterpoint to more radical student beliefs and forms of protest, McCarthy's

1 G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics and Change in the 1960s* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2008), 327.

2 Ibid, 328.

3 M.J. Heale, *The Sixties in America: History, Politics and Protest* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 19.

4 Kenneth J. Heineman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 2001), 137.

campaign and his student workers were able to expand the political spectrum of student activists and provide another important outlet for antiwar expression. Their difference from student radicals was especially prominent when the two groups were both present in Chicago for the Democratic National Convention, but by that time the McCarthy campaign was almost over, given that the primaries had ended. For this reason, looking at the Children's Crusade during its formative times, specifically the New Hampshire and Wisconsin primaries, is more effective in illustrating the McCarthy student activists' differences from student radicals.

The New Hampshire effort showed the campaign at its most purely antiwar moment; McCarthy hoped basically to challenge President Johnson enough to spark a reconsideration of the nation's policies in Vietnam. Some students did not even think that McCarthy was a truly electable candidate and were similarly hoping only to prove that dissent could attract voters so that other more attractive candidates would jump into the fray.⁵ However, most of the students who came to work for McCarthy originally felt that even working for a potentially hopeless candidate was still a better option as a form of protest than other more radical actions.⁶ Mary McCarthy, the Senator's daughter, for example, had signed up to participate in a hunger strike against the war at Radcliffe College before she decided to take a semester off to campaign for her father. In justifying this decision, McCarthy called working for her father "a more meaningful protest" than the hunger strike would have been.⁷ After weighing the options, she decided that the more radical course of action would not have had the outcome that she desired, which was ending the war. However, her decision was not based on any fear of punishment or a lack of strong antiwar sentiment. She weighed the options carefully and chose the more institutionalized option because she believed it to be the most effective. Her choice was different from that of the student radicals who felt that the political system was preventing the country from doing the right thing in Vietnam and consequently that working within this system would ultimately be unsuccessful. Mary McCarthy, by contrast, spoke for a segment of her generation that believed that working for someone who could directly affect national policies was

the best way to work against the war in Vietnam.⁸

Mary McCarthy was not the only student in the McCarthy campaign willing to stand up for the Senator. Other students with far fewer personal ties to the candidate also believed that working within the political system would be more effective than a popular protest or rally. Ben Stavis was a graduate student in Chinese politics at Columbia when he took time away from his studies to work for McCarthy. In his memoirs, Stavis wrote that he and his wife, Rosann, went to New Hampshire because they did not see any other way to help end the war.⁹ Unlike Mary McCarthy, the Stavises did not give much thought to a more radical method of protest at all; a very institutionalized approach was required to get them involved in politics. Stavis explains that he was aware of the more radical protests but did not consider them sufficiently politically relevant for him to involve himself- instead, he would work only for a campaign for the highest office in the land.¹⁰ This methodical institutionalization is also reflected in the sorts of jobs that Stavis took on during the New Hampshire campaign: he made maps of towns and districts for the students to use as they went door-to-door soliciting votes. While many student radicals sought attention-grabbing "impact" protests to draw media attention to their discontent over the war, Stavis was willing to work in a dark basement doing private work to advance the greater cause of the campaign. He believed that playing a smaller role in a larger, more institutionalized campaign would be more effective than playing a similarly-sized role in a popular protest, or even than leading a mass rally.

However, the McCarthy campaign was not the first time that Stavis had been involved in politics.¹¹ He had participated briefly in a campaign for a New York politician a few years earlier, and this experience had helped him shift toward a more politically active lifestyle. His thoughts about this early experience reflected many common sentiments among McCarthy's campaigners that are indicative of a quantitative shift in student activism. Prior to this experience, Stavis knew that students had been thought of as an "indifferent, incapable, and ineffective [group] in 'constructive' politics."¹² Most people

8 Ibid.

9 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 1.

10 Ibid.

11 It is important to note that both of Ben Stavis's forays into politics were to campaign for established politicians and not through popular protests. Thus, an institutionalized approach was always required to get the Stavises involved in politics, even though the McCarthy campaign was not their first experience.

12 Ibid, 5.

5 For example, some student protestors and older activists hoped that Robert Kennedy would see McCarthy's success and launch a more politically savvy and viable antiwar campaign.

6 Ben Stavis, *We Were the Campaign: New Hampshire to Chicago for McCarthy* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969), 3.

7 Harry Naltchayan, "Mary McCarthy Lists Priorities," *Washington Post*, February 13, 1968, sec. C.

saw all students with the lens through which they viewed radicals- they may have made a lot of noise and threatened the order of American life, but their opinions did not otherwise need to be taken seriously. In taking part in this earlier election, Stavis realized that there was a way for young people to contribute to politics and to make themselves heard without turning away the mainstream portion of adult society. He learned that a political campaign “was no more than the people who worked in it,” and students could be just as useful as professional organizers.¹³ Stavis may have come to the campaign with some prior experience with these lessons, but working for Senator McCarthy helped him solidify these thoughts, and he shared a renewed sense of empowerment with his fellow student campaigners.

Although Ben Stavis did not really contemplate other forms of political expression in great detail before he started working for McCarthy, other campaign workers more closely straddled the line between student radical and mainstream canvasser. Sam Brown, who eventually organized most of the student workers in multiple primaries, was one such person. Brown, also a graduate student, had been on the executive board of the National Student Association (NSA), which, although not in itself a radical organization, brought together students from across the country to promote student activism and education about campus issues.¹⁴ In so doing, many eventual leaders of the radical groups Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) established national networks and sparked discussions with other student leaders, including Brown. With his long sideburns and professional attire, Brown was a moderate in the NSA who was nevertheless exposed to the more stereotypical, radical version of student activism. Further proof of his moderation was the fact that Brown was initially involved in Republican politics as an undergraduate at Redlands College. Although he became very disenchanted with the Grand Old Party, Brown told the press that he was less concerned with the party affiliation than with the actual issues at hand, particularly civil rights and the Johnson administration’s Vietnam policy.¹⁵ This relative lack of concern for the two-party system was a sort of institutionalized form of a common sentiment among student radicals. Many of the more radical student groups wanted to do away with the current American political system entirely; Brown, on the other hand, chose

to remain within the system but to undercut the rigid traditional division between the two parties by moving between them. In this way, he blended a quasi-radical idea into a more politically viable plan of action. Thus, Brown represented many of the ways in which the McCarthy students began to “change the face of politics” by finding the middle between radicals and institutionalized politicians.¹⁶

Although the stories of Ben Stavis and Sam Brown might be construed as irrelevant because they had previous political experience, their quasi-leadership of other student volunteers and staff members helped turn a campaign of amateurs into near-professionals. In so doing, they created a New Hampshire campaign that strove to be different from the student radicals that filled the media at this time. The image of the campaign was of paramount importance- otherwise McCarthy’s candidacy would have been rejected by voters as radical, unrealistic, and even dangerous. To this end, volunteers who arrived in New Hampshire were immediately given a crash course in local social norms so that they would not be perceived as being related to the student radicals that many in the hawkish state despised.¹⁷ The campaign organizers also heavily emphasized the physical appearance of its volunteers as another way of differentiating them from longhaired, bearded men and miniskirted women who populated many radical rallies. Bearded men were generally not allowed to go door-to-door and talk to voters; instead, they were used around campaign headquarters in back-room jobs, like helping Ben Stavis create his canvassing maps. Whenever the media brought cameras, especially for television crews, the best-looking, most innocent girls were brought out to impress the media with their exuberance and clean-cut image.¹⁸ The media picked up on these differences right away, commenting that the girls working on the campaign “exude[d] earnestness.”¹⁹ This kind of comment was a great compliment to the McCarthy campaign because it showed potential voters that McCarthy had the support of upstanding young men and women who wanted the country to be a better place, not the student radicals who waved Viet Cong flags and wanted to destroy government fixtures. Another story told in the Washington Post contained a similarly complimentary story. A young bearded man was going door-to-door in Manchester, New Hampshire, when he met a man who told him that he did not like beards or talking about politics. In an

16 Ibid.

17 E. W. Kenworthy, “College Students Drum Up Votes for McCarthy,” *New York Times*, March 4, 1968, 16.

18 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 7.

19 Kenworthy, “College Students,” 16.

13 Ibid, 4.

14 “A Student for McCarthy: Samuel Winifred Brown, Jr.,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1968.

15 Ibid.

effort to convince the man to talk, the student asked for a razor. Upon receiving one, he proceeded to shave off his beard so that he could talk to the man about McCarthy.²⁰ This young man's actions showed both the importance of physical appearance in connecting with the voters as well as the commitment that students had to working within the system for their candidate. McCarthy's students knew that they had to be accepted by mainstream voters, and they were willing to make sacrifices to ensure that they were not perceived as radicals.

However, the physical appearance of the student workers was not the only difference with student radicals that the media noticed. Why so many young people were attracted to the sometimes reserved, scholarly Senator also intrigued the media. The Washington Post wrote that the students wanted to work for McCarthy because they found him "a decent man."²¹ They admired their candidate for standing up to President Johnson when no one else would. In appreciating these positive values, the students differed from their more radical counterparts who saw traditional values as part of what was wrong with the American outlook. Also, McCarthy had publicly stated on multiple occasions that a secondary goal of his campaign was to get students "off the streets and into the electoral process."²² Thus, the students who canvassed for McCarthy knew that they were partaking in a very explicit alternative to the radical protests that were engulfing their campuses. The fact that McCarthy succeeded admirably in fulfilling this goal from the get-go (several buses from Cambridge, Massachusetts, were turned away in the final days of the New Hampshire campaign because there was not enough work for the volunteers to do) showed that there were a lot of students who needed just such a political alternative to become involved. The New Hampshire campaign thus marked an important first step in broadening the political spectrum for college students.

After the initial excitement of the New Hampshire primary, McCarthy's Children's Crusade was growing as it moved to tackle the next primary contest in Wisconsin. By this time, the media had realized that both the campaign and the students in particular were to be taken seriously as political actors. Their actions became even more relevant during their time in Wisconsin as the Democratic party's outlook on the election changed twice- first when Senator Robert Kennedy announced his intention to seek the nomination, and then again when President Lyndon

Johnson announced unexpectedly that he would not seek the nomination to run for a second term. Ben Stavis noted that the launch of a Kennedy campaign in particular attracted national press coverage for the McCarthy campaign because the media realized that Senator Kennedy would not have entered the race if he had not seen McCarthy's success as an antiwar, anti-Johnson candidate in New Hampshire.²³

As the media studied the student campaign more closely, reporters quickly began to emphasize the students' ideological differences with their more radical counterparts- especially the fact that the McCarthy students chose to work within the political system instead of tearing it down.²⁴ An article in the New York Times during the Wisconsin campaign was harshly critical of student radicals, saying that they had no justification for their violence and destruction.²⁵ Because America provided these students with the opportunity to voice dissent and with regular elections to remove unwanted leaders from power- in short, because they had outlets for dissent provided to them- the reporter argued that student radicals lacked any sound reasoning behind their actions and were thus illegitimate. On the other hand, the McCarthy students, because they were working within the existing political system, were pointed to as an example of the "vitality of American democracy."²⁶ By explicitly drawing this comparison, the reporter helped inform his readers that some young people were far more moderate than the student radicals that had previously been attracting most of the media's attention.

John Lindsay, the mayor of New York City, expressed a similar sentiment the month before in a speech at Queens College. A strong antiwar politician, Lindsay praised students for being active in the antiwar movement, but he was careful to say that he did not support student radicals or their so-called "harassment tactics."²⁷ Lindsay argued that the radicals' actions were not actually going to

23 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 34.

24 The launch of Senator Kennedy's campaign, as discussed above, sparked much of this increased media coverage. As the media continued to write about the McCarthy students, they expanded upon the comparisons between the students and radicals that they had first articulated in New Hampshire. However, because they were slightly more practiced in comparing the two groups, the media moved away from more superficial comparisons toward focusing on political and ideological differences in Wisconsin, which is the focus of this paragraph.

25 "The Campus Militants," *New York Times*, April 26, 1968, p. 42.

26 Ibid.

27 Richard Reeves, "Mayor Urges Youths to Aid War Resistance," *New York Times*, March 20, 1968, p. 1.

20 Ward Just, "'Student Power' Boosts McCarthy," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1968, sec. A.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

have a real effect on national policy because they did not go beyond mere expression of discontent. He then praised the McCarthy students for going the extra mile— for working to persuade people to vote and potentially have a very real effect on America's foreign policy. Lindsay pointed to the New Hampshire campaign as a clear-cut example of what students were capable of when they focused on positive political activity and not simply on radical protests.²⁸ In this speech, the mayor made special note of the expanding political options available to students, and he encouraged his audience to take the more moderate (and in his opinion, more effective) course of action— that of the McCarthy students.

As the media attention on student involvement in politics continued to grow, reporters also started to talk to students working on both the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns. In their work, it became apparent that these students were fully aware that they were being used within the existing political system and that they accepted this role happily. A Princeton student working for Kennedy's campaign told a reporter that McCarthy's campaign had "kicked students back into the liberal framework" and also restored their faith in politics.²⁹ As one of the members of a largely discontented part of the American population, this student could easily have turned the other way and participated in other, more radical protests, but McCarthy's campaign helped open up more moderate courses of action for students to voice their opinions about the war. Furthermore, the fact that this student was working for Kennedy and still acknowledged the importance of the McCarthy campaign shows that McCarthy's first steps in challenging Johnson were a key turning point in broadening the options for politically conscious students.

One of McCarthy's speechwriters, Jeremy Larner, noted a similar fact in his memoirs. The students that he saw during the campaign were, in his opinion, "trying to make the process work" by participating in a traditional political campaign.³⁰ Like their more radical counterparts, the McCarthy students were ardently against both the draft and the war. Unlike the radicals, who believed that America was broken and needed to be overhauled completely, McCarthy's campaign workers believed that America could still be a beautiful place and that their basic institutions were still good.³¹ Even though both groups believed

ardently in the need for change in America, the McCarthy students went about seeking this change in a much more moderate way than their more radical counterparts, who could not be reconciled with the existing political system. These radicals, even when presented with an opportunity to work within the system for change, rejected it out of hand because they did not think the system worth challenging. Thus, McCarthy's campaign does represent a true broadening of the political spectrum, because the extremes remained firmly in place (and even ridiculed electoral solutions to the war) while the center expanded to incorporate these more moderate but still active students.

However, the McCarthy students did not differ from the radicals only in their more moderate beliefs; these students also used their education differently than their more leftist counterparts. In the Wisconsin campaign, with more-diverse urban centers than the campaign had encountered in New Hampshire, McCarthy's students put their higher educations to work by speaking European languages to potential voters in ethnic neighborhoods.³² While their more radical counterparts appealed to their audiences through sensationalism and inflammatory speeches, the more intellectual McCarthy students opted for cultural sensitivity to persuade a larger audience of their candidate's potential. Much like Ben Stavis' carefully made maps in New Hampshire, these bilingual students focused on more concrete, small-scale actions to make their point instead of on the splashier impact protests of their more radical counterparts.

With their increased media profile, McCarthy's students were being viewed more and more positively by both the media and by parents that the students met along the campaign trail. The *New York Times* called the McCarthy student campaign a "vast, exciting outpouring of democracy"³³ and also ran an article that emphasized McCarthy's calling his students "the most intelligent volunteers in the history of American politics."³⁴ The newspaper also took a survey that found that students in general were more hopeful about the future of America since the start of the McCarthy campaign, a sharp distinction from radicals who had such a gloomy outlook on the future of their country.³⁵ Because these students were making a positive contribution to the existing political system, the media

28 Ibid.

29 Nan Robertson, "Students and the Election: Anger Gives Way to Hope," *New York Times*, May 13, 1968, p. 1.

30 Jeremy Larner, *Nobody Knows: Reflections on the McCarthy Campaign of 1968* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), 52.

31 Ibid., 37.

32 "How McCarthy Did It in New Hampshire," *New York Times*, March 17, 1968, p. E1.

33 Ibid.

34 E.W. Kenworthy, "McCarthy's Aides Chant Victory," *New York Times*, March 13, 1968, p. 33.

35 Robertson, "Students and the Election," *New York Times*, May 13, 1968.

heaped praise upon them, further attracting attention to McCarthy's cause.

The media was not the only group that began to support the McCarthy students on a larger scale; many parents of college-age children were also fond of the new political activists. Most of the parents of the McCarthy students themselves were, according to Ben Stavis, "flattered that their children could make a contribution to national politics."³⁶ For parents of students who could have easily started participating in radical or even violent protests, the fact that their children were having a very real, positive impact within the existing political system became something of which these parents were proud instead of ashamed of their sons' and daughters' radicalism.

However, parents of non-campaigning students were also supportive of the McCarthy students who rung their doorbells while canvassing. The *New York Times* profiled an encounter between a female student canvassing for McCarthy and a Wisconsin housewife and portrayed the conversation as very polite and thoughtful—a sharp contrast with the angry and emotional rhetoric of the student radicals. The student was portrayed as very clean-cut and articulate, and these attributes clearly had a good impact on the housewife's view of the campaign—she reacted positively to the student's ideas and repeatedly said, "Good for you."³⁷ Even more neutral parents began to support the idea that students could make a positive contribution to the existing political system and were not all radical and bent on destruction.

By this point in the campaign, however, the students were becoming less of a massive canvassing machine and began to develop a real political consciousness, manifested most clearly in their growing concerns about their candidate's potential shortcomings. Ben Stavis, having studied political science in both his undergraduate and graduate work, especially began to have qualms with both the campaign and the candidate. Although the method used in the New Hampshire primary was mostly successful in Wisconsin as well, Stavis worried that the campaign was not being sufficiently innovative, and he later reflected that this lack on innovation hurt the campaign in later primaries, especially in Indiana and California.³⁸ Such criticisms showed that the workers were not just cogs in the McCarthy machine but were in fact becoming much more aware of the political system—lessons that would

stick with them after this particular campaign was over.

Stavis and his counterparts also had issues with the candidate for which they were working, not just the way the campaign was being run. These problems were exacerbated by the fact that the campaign in Milwaukee struggled to gain support from the ethnic, blue-collar neighborhoods in Wisconsin's largest city. Ben Stavis, realizing that the support of this group was a key part of the Democratic coalition, worried that McCarthy was too professorial and urbane to have the broad appeal necessary to win in November.³⁹ For other student workers, the experience in Milwaukee awakened them to the problem of civil rights. These students were extremely upset by McCarthy's failure to visit Milwaukee's black ghettos and felt that the campaign needed to make a stronger statement on civil rights.⁴⁰ Although the campaign started as a more general antiwar and anti-Johnson movement, McCarthy had to address other issues and develop a more well-rounded platform as it progressed and gained more support. Consequently, the students who worked for him also became more critical thinkers when it came to political issues; they were no longer mere laborers but actually experienced a well-rounded political awakening, further showing that the political spectrum was being qualitatively as well as ideologically expanded.

Unfortunately for the McCarthy campaign, Hubert Humphrey entered the race shortly after the Wisconsin primary to carry the Johnson administration's banner. Because of the nominating procedures in the Democratic Party at the time, Humphrey was able to work almost exclusively through party bosses and stereotypical smoky back rooms to start garnering delegates for the convention. McCarthy nonetheless continued to campaign in primaries and hoped to garner enough popular support to take the nomination from Humphrey. Thus, McCarthy's campaign became one of many groups that converged on Chicago in August, hoping to provide a powerful statement of their discontent with the current government.

Student radicals also had big plans for the convention week, including several large protests and actions to show their distaste for the Democratic Party.⁴¹ Many extremely radical groups like the Yippies and Students for a Democratic Society as well as more moderate groups came to the city to protest the war, the draft, and Hubert

36 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 36.

37 Steven V. Roberts, "Students Solicit McCarthy Votes: Wisconsin Doorbell Ringers Organized for Campaign," *New York Times*, March 25, 1968, p. 44.

38 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 52.

39 Ibid., 132.

40 Larner, *Nobody Knows*, 48.

41 Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 322-323.

Humphrey's probable presidential nomination.⁴² These students clashed violently with Mayor Richard Daley's police forces, who had been told to keep order at any and all costs; this obsession with order led to students and journalists being beaten and pepper-sprayed almost at random, even during peaceful protests.⁴³ McCarthy actually urged his student workers not to go to Chicago because he feared they would be mistaken for radicals and consequently become targets of police violence.

To a certain extent, McCarthy's fears were completely legitimate because his students constituted a sort of halfway point between the liberal establishment and student radicals. Even in their physical manifestations, the McCarthy students in their suits and long sideburns blended the straight-laced with the rebellious, making it easy for them to be confused with their more radical peers.⁴⁴ Hubert Humphrey's candidacy invoked considerable ire among both radicals and McCarthy students. When Humphrey arrived in Chicago, McCarthy students showed up at his hotel, yelling such things as "Stop the war!" Ben Stavis reported that the candidate was very confused by the fact that such remarks were coming from a well-dressed crowd.⁴⁵ The incident nonetheless again shows that McCarthy students often blended aspects of the establishment and the radicals; in this case, it was a mainstream physical appearance combined with more popular protest-like methods.

Some of the leaders of the McCarthy movement explicitly considered themselves to be the links between the establishment and the radicals. Sam Brown, for example, organized students for McCarthy but had also rubbed elbows with radicals during his time with the National Student Association. Later, speaking to the *New York Times*, Brown noted that he did believe, to a certain extent, that marches and protests, so long as they were respectful, could have a hand in solving the country's problems. Even though Brown opted not to use the radicals' methods, he did empathize with their ideas about fixing the country.⁴⁶ Taken with their mixed physical appearance,

42 The Yippies were a group headed by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin who sought to poke fun at American militarism as a means to bring down the war machine. They attempted to nominate a pig named Pigasus for the Democratic candidate for President, but they also advocated violence against the police.

43 Ibid., 319.

44 Walter Goodman, "The Liberal Establishment Faces the Blacks the Young the Left," *New York Times*, December 29, 1968, p. SM8.

45 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 177.

46 Goodman, "The Liberal Establishment," *New York Times*, December 29, 1968.

this incident shows that the divide between the McCarthy students and student radicals was a fluid one, suggesting more of a spectrum than an outright divide.

Having both the radicals and the McCarthy students in Chicago for the convention permitted an exchange of ideas between the two that furthered this spectrum. Early in the convention week, a group of radicals visited the McCarthy storefront to talk to the students there, encouraging their more straight-laced counterparts to abandon the "foolish and wasteful" electoral system in favor of more militant actions.⁴⁷ Stavis, in obvious disagreement with their ideas, considered asking them to leave the storefront but ultimately decided against it. In justifying this decision, he wrote that he allowed them to remain in the office because he thought it might be helpful to some of the younger McCarthy students to hear some opposing ideas and to learn how to argue against them. He also knew that some of his coworkers were closer ideologically to the radicals than he was, and might therefore want to hear their arguments. Thus, even though he personally did not agree with the radicals, Stavis nonetheless points to the fact that there was a variety of beliefs among McCarthy workers, some of which might have connected to the broader political spectrum by being closer to radical ideas.

Despite some similarities between the two groups, radicals and campaigners were perceived very differently by the media. Student radicals were treated very poorly by the media during the convention, a stark contrast to the positive portrayals of McCarthy students during the campaign. Most common throughout the coverage was the use of military imagery, describing the student radicals as "mobs" that engaged in "pitched battles with police."⁴⁸ The CBS Network similarly ran a story about "militant young demonstrators."⁴⁹ The newsmakers drew the image that these bearded young protestors were literally attacking and making war on the police, implicitly attacking the structures of law and order and the established system. Furthermore, CBS acknowledged a few days later that it was unfair to paint the picture that all youths were part of this mob of demonstrators.⁵⁰ This shows that the network was aware of the McCarthy students and their moderation, even as it further divides the two camps into those that attacked the system like an army and those who worked

47 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 180.

48 Evening News Broadcast, American Broadcast Corporation, August 27, 1968.

49 Evening News Broadcast, Corporate Broadcast Corporation, August 27, 1968.

50 Ibid., August 29, 1968.

within it.

Although this stark difference may have been imposed on the two groups by the media coverage without examining the gray area between the two, it was not the most important distinction. It was the hope that the McCarthy students retained in the democratic system that truly distinguished them from their more radical counterparts, no matter how close they may have otherwise come methodologically or ideologically. After the convention, both groups were nursing wounds from the violence they had experienced and witnessed both inside and outside the convention hall. However, even though the McCarthy students had just watched their candidate lose after all their hard work, they were still proud of the fact that they had helped to change the electoral process by drawing attention to the problems with the Democratic nominating process, especially that a more popular candidate (McCarthy) was not nominated in favor of one who satisfied only the party bosses (Humphrey).⁵¹ Furthermore, when, at the close of the convention, someone suggested that the McCarthy students take part in a militant march to the Amphitheater where the convention was held, Sam Brown immediately spoke against it, reminding his coworkers that the McCarthy campaign had always remained “within the system” and they should not forsake this now.⁵² Such a statement showed that the consciousness of moderation remained with the McCarthy students throughout their campaign, even when they were upset by their loss.

The media picked up on this moderation and hope as well. The New York Times, speaking with students right after the convention ended, noted that the mood in the McCarthy camp “was aimless rather than angry.”⁵³ This was an implicit reference to the student radicals, who, having experienced the violence of the police during the convention, walked away from Chicago very angry and even more disillusioned with the democratic process. The McCarthy students, on the other hand, may not have known where to go to direct their newfound political passions, but they still remained hopeful that they could continue to have a positive impact on the electoral process. The same article also noted that the McCarthy students, in considering their next moves, “would rather ring doorbells than build barricades.”⁵⁴ Such a statement harkens back to the military imagery often used to describe stu-

dent radicals, many of who only deepened their war with mainstream society after the violence of Chicago. It showed that many McCarthy students did not want to cut themselves off from mainstream society but instead would continue to work within it to bring about change. This sentiment was further reflected by the fact that many McCarthy students later worked for smaller-scale Democratic candidates like prospective Senator Paul O’Dwyer.⁵⁵ Even though they did not transfer their allegiances to Hubert Humphrey, they continued to work within the Democratic Party and support its candidates.

An interview with NBC after the convention further illustrated the positive views the McCarthy students held for the future of their country. The students were all dressed in suits or dresses, and the men among them were beardless. The interviewer called them very thoughtful and given to reflection, putting the stamp of approval on their political activism.⁵⁶ The students were very optimistic about the 1972 election and their future in politics- even when they were asked if they were depressed by the results of the convention, most students responded negatively, noting that they had still had a positive impact on the Democratic nomination as a whole and that they remained optimistic about their ability to affect positive change in politics. These responses point to the fact that most students had an overwhelmingly positive experience working within the established system and intended to remain within its bounds for the foreseeable future.

Taken together, the work of the McCarthy students, from the first primary in New Hampshire until after the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, left an indelible mark on both the Democratic Party and student activism. They helped bring attention to the deep problems with the Democrats’ nominating process, contributing to reforms that resulted in a much more democratic nominating process, which in turn strengthened the party as a whole. The fact that these students were both ideologically and methodologically more moderate than their more radical counterparts showed that there was a group of students who were willing to work within the existing system to deal with their problems and bring about change. Because they were willing to use this system, these students were instrumental in creating the students as a voting bloc, much like blue-collar workers, Catholics, or Hispanics were more traditional voting groups whose support a candidate had to seek. This voting bloc exer-

51 Evening News Broadcast, National Broadcast Corporation, August 30, 1968.

52 Stavis, *We Were the Campaign*, 196.

53 Steven V. Roberts, “Young McCarthy Aides Will Not Go Away,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1968, p. 20.

54 Ibid.

55 Steven V. Roberts, “Enthusiastic College Crowds Plunge Into O’Dwyer Campaign,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1968, p. 38.

56 Evening News Broadcast, National Broadcast Corporation, August 30, 1968.

cised considerable political influence in subsequent years, especially after the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. Importantly, though, it continues to play a crucial role today, as when President Barack Obama attracted considerable youth excitement in his 2008 election victory. The fact that these students worked within the existing political system also suggests that students as a whole should not have been blamed for the end of the liberal consensus. While protests and riots may have been an expression of discontent with this system, there was a group of students who remained within it and agreed broadly with the ideas behind the liberal consensus, and it is important to note their contribution, not to the end of the postwar consensus, but to attempts to retain it.

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