

# REPUBLICRATS



## THE TWO-PARTY DUOPOLY



OCCUCARD #15



EXPOSING AND OPPOSING THE CORPORATE STATE

**T**he two-party duopoly is a common term used to describe the political system in the U.S., in which two political parties—the Republicans and Democrats—dominate government while holding virtually identical positions on most economic and foreign policy issues. Funded by the same corporate interests, these two parties are sometimes together referred to as “Republicrats” because they resemble two wings of a single party whose policies benefit large corporations and the super rich against the interests of the vast majority (despite holding very different positions on cultural issues in which corporations have little or no interest).

Within the two-party duopoly, third parties are shut out of the political process altogether. For example, restrictive ballot access laws require third party candidates to collect tens of thousands of signatures. In addition, they are systematically ignored by the corporate media and excluded from the Presidential debates. (The Commission on Presidential Debates is a private corporation headed by former Republican and Democratic leaders, and funded by big corporate interests.) The “winner take all” voting system used in congressional and state legislative elections also precludes third-party representation, as runners-up get nothing, even when the margin of victory is narrow. Because of this, the vast majority of democracies in the world—including all European countries—use “proportional representation” (PR) voting systems, in which legislative seats are divided proportionally based on the percentage of votes each party receives. Such voting systems give voters more choice, produce multi-party legislatures, and reduce the ability of monied interests to control the political process.

In the U.S., however, the two-party system easily lends itself to corporate manipulation and control. This is particularly true when neither party holds a wide majority, as small margins ensure that lobbyists need only convince a few legislators from one party to vote with their opposition. By funding candidates from both parties, therefore, corporations do not

simply purchase loyalty, but they prevent either party from obtaining a continuous, popular majority that might challenge corporate interests. Also, the culture wars between “liberal” and “conservative” value systems conveniently divide the voters between the two parties by providing them with real yet economically insignificant reasons to prefer one party over the other. As political philosopher Sheldon Wolin writes in his book, *Democracy Incorporated*, “The point about [these cultural] disputes is that they are not framed to be resolved. Their political function is to divide the citizenry while obscuring class differences and diverting the voters’ attention from the social and economic concerns of the general populace.”

The proliferation of corporate-funded “Super PACs” (a result of the 2010 Supreme Court decision, *Citizens United*, which allows corporations unlimited funding of political campaigns) is only the most recent example of corruption within the U.S. electoral system. Elections have long been rigged in favor of the two corporate parties. For third parties to have any real chance of adequate representation, major, systemic reforms are necessary. These include breaking up media monopolies, having purely publicly funded campaigns, instituting PR voting systems, adding a binding “none of the above” option on all ballots, establishing universal voter registration, and much more. Such reforms would weaken, if not destroy, the two-party duopoly, and will therefore be strongly resisted by current Republicrats and the powerful interests that back them. Only a mass movement of **education, protest and civil disobedience** that puts tremendous outside pressure upon the corporate state will be capable of bringing about such a fundamental transformation of the electoral system.

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