

Political Convergence or Avoidance?

Ralph Nader sidesteps open-borders lobby in critique of corporate abuse

By JEFFREY STEWART

In his latest work, *Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State*, Ralph Nader makes a “call for convergence” of the Left and Right political spheres on the issue of Big Business’s distortive effects on the democratic process. Considering no single-issue advocate understands the corporate takeover of public policy better than a true immigration reformer, on its face Nader’s new work looks like an intriguing read for *TSC* supporters.

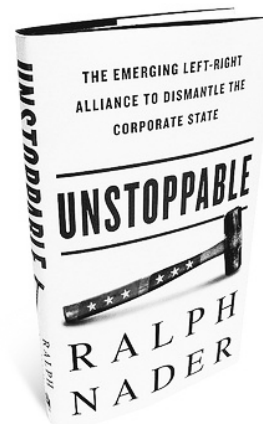
Nader opens his discussion bemoaning the “helplessness” that’s become ingrained in our national culture and has made, he says, concerned citizens from either side of the spectrum into easy fodder for the corporate elite. From his long activist history, Nader pulls up several examples of “convergence” against the corporate state, such as the halting of the financially disastrous Breeder Nuclear Reactor Project in 1982 by a coalition of environmentalists and conservatives. Such examples, all of which Nader had a hand in, attempt to bring color to his “convergence” idea and at the very least help to chronicle what seems to be the man’s never-ending career in social activism.

Unstoppable’s focus is mostly on the Right, especially the conservative working and middle classes, whom he rightly reminds us are not represented by “conservative” corporate-funded institutions, like the “Cato Institute and the Hoover Institution.” Taking a swipe at the “independence” of these groups, Nader writes, when the big corporate players like Walmart, McDonald’s, and Pizza Hut, need to, for instance, “block minimum wage increases, even those that just keep up with inflation,” they simply draw up their think-tank “professional apologists” to “demonstrate conclusively” that such raises “will cost lower-paid workers their jobs.”

In an attempt to mend the perception of the Right as servants to Big Business, Nader tries to clarify and expound upon the ideas and thinkers of traditional conservatism, showing in the process a surprising amount of knowledge of and respect for the movement. He

recounts a question he once posed to Bill Bennett, so long a prominent figure of the conservative movement, about whether he agreed that “corporate power is on a collision course with conservative principles.” “Without hesitation,” we’re told, “Bill said ‘Yes.’”

Still, the criticism Nader saves for the Right when discussing corporate slavishness is much too unbalanced. In the single chapter Nader saves to criticize the Left, after only two pages he veers back into skewering the Republican Party for supporting corporate welfare.



UNSTOPPABLE
The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State
 by Ralph Nader
 Nation
 Books
 240 pp.,
 \$25.99



Barely mentioned is that the Left’s dramatically changed since Nader’s early days and even since the early days of Clinton. The contemporary Left has fully embraced the corporate sector and is no longer concerned with being accused of “selling out,” whether it is by teaming up with the corporate elite or by becoming the corporate elite themselves.

Immigration is a perfect example of this phenomenon. With a straight face, professors of “immigration studies” within the social sciences departments of academia have for years referred to the so-called “Rights-Markets” coalition or the supposed complementary alliance between “immigration rights” activists and “free-market” capitalists. Apparently, the motives of capitalists, such as grinding down the working class, are no longer a concern for the contemporary Left. By aligning with Big Business on the immigration issue, Leftists have dropped all pretenses that they embody

Jeffrey Stewart is an attorney living in Washington, D.C.

the interests of working people.

The extent to which the Left and Big Business exploit the immigration issue is large and deep and already well known to *TSC* readers. So wide is the gap between what the broad public wants and what they get in immigration policy, I'm still mildly surprised when figures like Nader or Noam Chomsky or Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), all pro-labor figures of the old Left, fail to raise the issue when discussing today's impoverished state of labor — to note, Sanders did air some reservations about S.744's H-1B provisions; however, it wasn't long before he joined the amnesty crowd and helped push the bill through the Senate.



Not only does Nader fail to broach the subject of immigration in his book, the word isn't even mentioned, as a quick index search can show. An entire book about corporate subsidies (which immigration most certainly is) failing to discuss issues like the billions spent by the open-borders lobby should be a major indictment on the publishing industry.

Even when he rails against “the loss of sovereignty” and the “undermining of our workers’ jobs” due to trade agreements like NAFTA, Nader avoids discussion of the major role played here by mass immigration. That he speaks so passionately about the pressures imposed on working people makes this omission all the more glaring. On “free trade,” he further writes, “[o]ther provisions in these agreements, always negotiated in secret, except for “consultations” with the corpo-

rate lobbies, would sear the sensibilities of just about all Americans of whatever persuasion, who experienced the consequences in their daily lives.” Replace the topic of trade with last year's coordination between the Gang of Eight and who would miss a beat?

Nader gives himself ample opportunity in other parts of *Unstoppable* to discuss the effects of immigration but again refuses to deliver. No doubt comforting to *TSC* readers is the surprising amount of coverage given to Pat Buchanan and Ron Unz, whom he treats like potential emancipators of the “convergence” movement's right half. But although they're widely covered in the book, Nader fails to mention that restricting immigration is one of the central concerns of both men. For instance, there's much praise reserved for Unz's push for an increased minimum wage, but never are the actual *reasons* for his position elaborated on, i.e., to bring American citizens back into the menial jobs currently occupied by illegals.

Even top conservative opinion makers sometimes shake the standard mythology, Arch-corporatist right-winger and Mellon heir, billionaire [the late] Richard Scaife has been a major factor in building right-wing think tanks, like the Heritage Foundation, and bankrolling right-wing corporatist candidates. That did not stop him from placing a costly, full-page ad in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2011 defending Planned Parenthood and praising founder Margaret Sanger with these words: “I respect her dedication to making health care and birth-control services available to all Americans, especially those with low incomes, no insurance and no other recourse to medical services.”

—*Unstoppable* author Ralph Nader

All this will be infuriating for restrictionist readers, as they *know* Nader is cognizant and suspicious of Corporate America's grip on immigration policy. Given a man of his experience in fighting corporate abuse and cronyism in government, it's without a doubt he has given plenty of thought to mass immigration's effect on the environment or the open-borders lobby's push to compress wages.

Immigration would've been a perfect topic for *Unstoppable*. For a book about bi-partisan issues, it's a glaring omission. Just what is partisan about environmental conservation, income inequality, or the growing erosion of our social institutions due to alienation and atomization and the failure of assimilation? Considering the sweeping effects of mass immigration on our nation, it's difficult to believe how a “Left-Right Alliance” can “emerge” without discussing the most abused, exploited, and politicized area of our public policy. ■