

## **A Problem That Looks Like a Nail:**

**Is Certification the Right Tool for Strengthening the Progressive Movement?**

Dahvi Wilson  
Yale University  
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# INTRODUCTION

The lack of coordination within the Progressive movement has been blamed for the failure of Progressive groups to capture the hearts and minds of the American public. To remedy this, it has been widely argued that diverse and divergent Progressive organizations must find a way of working together and offering a clear and unified vision for the future. Many groups are prescribing this general solution, but few, if any, have succeeded in providing direct mechanisms for attaining it. This effort is especially challenging due to the long-standing difficulty of uniting the Left, a group of individuals who have historically valued autonomy and freedom of thought above cooperation with each other. Progressive organizers are looking for new models to support a culture of enhanced collaboration among Progressive groups.

In the last 15 years, non-state, market-driven (NSMD) certification programs have begun to emerge in various consumer markets, offering an innovative tool for addressing what some social activists have come to see as failures of traditional regulatory schemes. As they have matured, these programs have evolved to provide very unique forms of governance that are principle-driven, transparent, and democratic.

This paper seeks to understand whether a certification tool, modeled after those used by such successful programs, could be applied to solve the coordination problems facing the Progressive movement. Part One will attempt to describe the coordination challenges facing Progressive groups and suggest why certification is an attractive tool for solving these problems. Part Two will outline the set of characteristics, strategies, and conditions necessary for supporting the success of NSMD certification programs and investigate how these qualities have revealed themselves in the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) timber certification program. Part Three will refer to the lessons learned from the FSC program to determine whether the appropriate conditions

currently exist for the successful implementation of a Progressive certification program. Finally, we will draw some conclusions about whether certification is an appropriate tool for solving the collaboration problems facing the Progressive community.

## **PART ONE: THE PROGRESSIVE PROBLEM AND A POTENTIAL SOLUTION**

### The Disempowerment of Progressive Organizations

In the 2002 elections, it became undeniably clear for the first time that there was a new political powerhouse overtaking the nation. The Republican Party, bolstered by a strong Conservative movement, now controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress. Within months of taking office, the Bush administration had made it clear that it would use its “mandate” to further the interests of its constituency, a group that included social and fiscal conservatives, proliferators, NRA activists, corporate lobbyists, anti-tax groups, the religious right, and many others. Notably, this group tended to exclude civil rights activists, environmental groups, social justice organizers, the gay/lesbian/transgender community, pro-choice organizers, and other members of the emerging “Progressive” movement.

In many cases, the results were obvious. In the four years following the election, Progressive organizations would go on the defensive, trying to defend the victories they had achieved in the past. The queer community fought to defend the constitution from an amendment that would ban them from marrying. Pro-choice activists began to prepare themselves for an assault on Roe versus Wade. Scientists struggled to keep evolution in school curricula and to protect the meaning of rigorous scientific research. After September 11, anti-war groups began to point out the similarities between the new war being waged in Iraq and the Vietnam debacle that many swore they would never allow

to happen again. Human rights groups began to challenge the government's policies on detainees and "military combatants." Environmental groups united to rebuff federal attempts to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to prevent the weakening of clean air and water standards, and to force the federal government to communicate the threat of global warming. Though some of these efforts were ultimately successful, Progressives knew that they were losing ground fast, and the final evidence of this came in November 2004, when George W. Bush was elected to a second term.

For the last six years, it has been clear that the Progressives are not winning. In fact, further proof of this point can be found in the plethora of articles, books, and presentations that have been released in the last four years evaluating and analyzing the strategic missteps of the Progressive movement.<sup>1</sup> In general, these failings can be grouped into two primary areas: insufficient strategy and lack of vision.

Analysis of the last 30 years indicates that the Progressives have been notoriously bad at developing sound strategy to gain influence and power in American politics. They have failed to build a clear identity and a unified message. They have never sought to coordinate the various issue-groups included within their movement, trusting the traditional method of maintaining a loosely-connected structure of autonomous activists and organizations. They have accepted infighting within their ranks and demonstrated no degree of message discipline. They have neglected to construct an infrastructure capable of linking policy ideas and strategic messages with grassroots organizers, media outlets, and politicians. They have not invested in the development of training programs to shape their scattering of activists into a cadre of strong messengers. They have proven weak at engaging new constituencies, uninterested in creating any kind of movement larger than a

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<sup>1</sup> These sources include: *Crashing the Gate*, by Armstrong and Zuniga; *Don't Think of an Elephant*, by Lakoff; "The Conservative Message Machine's Money Matrix," by Stein; and numerous others. Several related newspaper and magazine articles have also been written recently. Some of these sources are referenced in "Lessons from the Right," by Krencicki and Wilson.

single campaign, and reluctant to adapt to a quickly changing political context, in which citizens are more often consumers of politics than active participants in it.

In addition, Progressives have lacked vision. They have been slow to identify the core values for which they stand and even slower to communicate them to the public. They have produced no common narrative to describe the world that they are fighting to create. They have failed to share a compelling message or ideology strong enough to stand up to the one promoted by the Conservative Right. They have never attempted to agree upon a set of principles that guide *all* Progressives, seeming content to work in their own, autonomous spheres of influence.

Though this modus operandi worked for Progressives for many years, the last decade has demonstrated that things must change if Progressives are to gain increased influence in American politics. Strategists, think tanks, and political organizers across the country are working to develop new solutions and new methods for building a more powerful Progressive movement. Whatever solutions are chosen will have to address both the lack of strategic coordination and the lack of vision that has plagued the Progressives in the last several elections, a very tall order for a fragmented community.

### Why Consider an FSC-Style Certification Tool for Progressives?

In the search for an innovative solution to the challenges described above, the environmental sector's Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) presents an interesting model for consideration. The FSC, first created in 1993, is an international non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting "environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests." (FSC 2006) Divided into three chambers – environmental, social, and economic – the FSC works democratically to make decisions that are

acceptable to representatives of a diverse set of constituencies, including timber producers, environmental organizations, and indigenous peoples. Rather uniquely, this governance structure has created an effective, collaborative working group, which acts on behalf of a shared set of values-based principles, and operates transparently under rules designed to preserve accountability. (Gale)

In addition to the unique governance structure of the FSC itself, the organization uses the unusual mechanism of certification to inspire change on the ground. This market-based tool harnesses the power of consumer demand and retail pressure to encourage a shift toward more sustainable forest practices. When working properly, this solution requires no regulation and no government participation, and it operates as a “carrot” solution rather than a “stick” solution, creating self-sustaining incentives for preferred behaviors without directly threatening to penalize non-participating entities.

For both of these reasons, and the apparent (if less than obvious) similarities existing between the competitive timber industry and the Progressive philanthropic market, certification holds intriguing promise for fixing the coordination problems plaguing the movement. However, when one has a hammer, every problem can end up looking like a nail. Further analysis of the model is required to determine whether certification is actually an appropriate solution to the Progressive coordination problem.

## **PART TWO: THE CERTIFICATION TOOL**

In order to understand whether an FSC-style certification program could work to coordinate Progressive advocacy groups, we must first understand a bit more about how the FSC certification

tool functions in the forest sector. Once this is clear, we may determine whether it may be an appropriate tool for application in the political realm.

### The Six Characteristics of Successful NSMD Systems

FSC certification is an NSMD solution to unsustainable forest practices in the timber industry. According to Bernstein and Cashore (2004), NSMD models are defined by the following six characteristics:

1. They exist in the absence of state authority;
2. They possess institutionalized governance mechanisms;
3. They possess market-based authority;
4. They affect policy in the social arena;
5. They glean their authority from stakeholders and broader civil society;
6. They contain enforcement mechanisms and mandatory requirements for preferred action.

Without the presence of these traits, Bernstein and Cashore argue, a program is not truly NSMD and may very well be unsuccessful. However, as these authors point out, FSC's certification program does indeed possess all of the aforementioned qualities.

#### *Absence of State Authority*

The FSC regulates forest practices without and outside the presence of government regulations. With the exception of a principle requiring that forest managers act in accordance with the laws of their nations, FSC certification standards do not demand government involvement or enforcement. (FSC-US) This makes certification a more practical tool for those who wish to inspire change, allowing them to avoid the inefficiencies of working within highly bureaucratic and political government agencies.

## *Institutionalized Governance Mechanisms*

As described by Bernstein and Cashore,

...NSMD systems create governing systems- i.e. institutions designed to create and implement policy where actors and organizations participate in adaptive policy-making deliberations. The most advanced systems have created sophisticated institutions for the participation of civil society and organized groups, including even popular elections among members, and processes through which policies adapt over time in response to learning, deliberation and conflict among members of the community. (Bernstein and Cashore, 11)

NSMD models and, more specifically, FSC certification create intricate governance structures to regulate the manner in which their internal decisions are made. This allows them to preserve a degree of adaptability and malleability, while ensuring that decision-making power continues to be distributed among stakeholders.

The FSC governing structure is made up of a General Assembly of participating organizations and companies, which is divided into three chambers: social, environmental, and economic. From this group, a Board of Directors is elected with representatives from each of the chambers. In addition, the structure is designed to ensure that nations from both the global North and South (a proxy for level of economic development) are equally represented in decision-making. All FSC resolutions are proposed and passed either by the Board or by the members of the General Assembly. (FSC 2002)

The FSC's unique governance structure helps promote a highly democratic decision-making process. The program's open membership, commitment to interest balancing, deliberative decision making, accountability, and decentralization ensure that the process functions in a non-authoritarian manner. (Gale) It is largely the guidance of this structure that has made the FSC so successful in encouraging cooperation among divergent constituencies.

### *Market-Based Authority*

FSC certification is a market-driven mechanism. It works by promising timber producers increased access to markets, or even price premiums, for sustainably grown and harvested timber. By attaining FSC certification, forest producers are able to demonstrate that they have complied with socially and environmentally sustainable harvesting and production practices. If there truly is a group of consumers interested in supporting best forest practices, then certification can help these consumers identify which products to buy. As Bernstein and Cashore describe, “The market logic requires that customers – whether manufacturers, retailers or end-users – will demand products or services that adhere to the standards in the marketplace.” (Bernstien and Cashore, 13) Thus, firms are encouraged to improve their practices as required for certification, in order to gain opportunity for increased profit.

Unfortunately, the market demand for FSC certified product has proven weaker than many initially hoped. No significant consumer-level preference for FSC certified product has emerged, and in almost all cases, no price premium has been reported. (FES521) The most powerful market influence yet to present itself in favor of FSC certification has come from end-of-line retailers, who, when faced with massive threats to their brand images, began to preferentially stock FSC certified product in their stores. (FES521) In fact, in the absence of true consumer demand, market-campaigns attacking retailer brands have played a critical role in strengthening the presence of the FSC, and this effect will be discussed further later in this paper.

### *Policy Arena is the Social Domain*

As Bernstein and Cashore argue, “NSMD systems impose social and environmental regulatory *burdens* on the companies who join them...What makes NSMD governance systems unique, and worthy of careful conceptual and empirical attention, is that their primary aim is to

embed markets in broader societal needs.” (Bernstein and Cashore,13) In other words, though they are not regulatory, NSMD systems attempt to integrate socially and environmentally normative policies into existing, amoral markets.

FSC certification has been designed to promote a set of social and environmental principles within the forest sector. These principles are reflected in the FSC standards, which include requirements for a system of long-term tenure and use responsibilities; the protection of indigenous people’s rights; the enhancement of the long-term, social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities; the encouragement of sustainable, efficient, and equitable use of forest products; the minimization of negative environmental impacts; and the presence of a management plan and assessment strategy. (FSC-US) By using the market to reward firm behavior in accordance with these principles, the FSC seeks to shift policies within the social domain.

### *Stakeholders and Broader Civil Society Part of Authority Granting Process*

According to best practices documents produced by ISEAL, the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance, NSMD certification systems must be developed collaboratively to be successful. (ISEAL) As described in these papers,

It is important that interested parties are involved even in elaboration of the standard development procedures...The type of representation needs to be defined by the standard-setting organization but should include some form of balanced participation from major interest sectors, which can include: producers, consumers, traders, retailers, unions, NGOs, indigenous groups, government, local authorities, international organizations, researchers and academic bodies. (ISEAL, 3)

In fact, the FSC has been governed and designed by its stakeholders. The standards were collaboratively designed through a process of discussion and compromise between industry representatives and non-profit groups. (FES521) Furthermore, the standards remain adaptable through voting by the General Assembly. (FSC 2002)

Furthermore, as opposed to governmentally driven systems, the FSC derives its legitimacy from its stakeholders. Crediting James Rosenau, Bernstein and Cashore argue that, “the essence of [NSMD systems] is that they derive their legitimacy from the voluntary and conditional participation of individuals who can revoke their consent at any time.” (Bernstein and Cashore, 14) When firms, environmental groups, or social organizations become FSC members, they are granted the opportunity to become involved in developing its governing process, and in their participation, they grant it legitimacy.

This is also important, as ISEAL guidance documents argue, because “When stakeholders have confidence in the process and its legitimacy, differences among stakeholders can co-exist without disrupting the process.” (Brynne and Mallet, 2) In order to be successful, certification programs like the FSC must be able to work across the differences and disagreements that emerge among their diverse constituencies. By giving stakeholders the authority to help design and govern the certification process, FSC is able to give participants ownership in the process, thereby encouraging effective collaboration.

### *Enforcement Mechanisms and Mandatory Requirements*

A final mandatory characteristic of NSMD systems is that they must include some means of assessing behaviors and enforcing standards. In contrast to state-driven models, which generally rely upon complex legal structures and enforcement agencies and to ensure compliance with law, no institutional entities exist to regulate compliance in an NSMD system. For this reason, assessment and enforcement protocols must be clearly incorporated into NSMD structures. (Bernstein and Cashore)

In the case of the FSC, this comes in the form of a third-party audit, in which teams of auditors who have been approved by the FSC do on-the-ground surveys of a firm’s practices to

determine its compliance. (FES521) Much like an investigative unit of the IRS or the FBI, these auditing teams are responsible for determining whether standards are being met. If the team determines that a firm is in non-compliance, that firm is denied certification. In addition, once certification is obtained, annual follow-up audits are conducted to ensure that a firm maintains its compliance. The third-party audit system thus serves as a powerful enforcement mechanism for the FSC's NSMD program.

These six factors describe successful NSMD systems, and they help define the ways that NSMD systems differ from state systems. However, they are not the only factors that determine the ability of a new NSMD system to emerge. We must also consider the role of legitimacy in the success of these programs, as well as the surrounding conditions required to support them.

## Legitimacy

As described above, the legitimacy of an NSMD system like FSC certification is granted and maintained by its stakeholders. (Bernstein and Cashore, Cashore) As opposed to state driven systems, which are automatically granted legitimacy by their affiliation with a ruling government, NSMD systems must be deemed legitimate by members of the market, who are free to participate in them or not. Given this, it is helpful to understand what legitimacy means to market members and how legitimacy may be gained by a system.

### Three Types of Legitimacy

According to Suchman, legitimacy is “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of

norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” (Suchman, 574) He goes on to outline three different types of organizational legitimacy: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy is the short-term, self-interested calculation, by a set of direct constituents, that an entity will benefit them. Moral legitimacy is a normative judgment, by a constituency, that an entity is “good” or “doing the right thing.” Cognitive legitimacy is a sort of “taken for grantedness,” not exactly an evaluation but the internalizing of an entity to the point where its removal seems somehow ridiculous. Though moral legitimacy is a bit harder to earn than pragmatic legitimacy, it is also harder to lose once granted. Cognitive legitimacy is the hardest of the three types to build, but it is “the most powerful source of legitimacy identified to date.” (Suchman, 583)

The FSC has pursued all three types of legitimacy over the course of its development, but arguably, it has only succeeded in achieving pragmatic and moral legitimacy thus far. Pragmatic legitimacy is granted to the FSC nearly every time a firm agrees to become an FSC member or to seek certification. In making the profit-oriented choice to absorb the costs of certifying, firms are recognizing the greater pragmatic benefits to them of this choice. Similarly, in working to promote FSC certification, environmental and social organizations recognize that doing so will further their missions and benefit their interests directly.

FSC certification has also been granted moral legitimacy. Environmental and social groups commonly support the program, because they believe that doing so is “good,” or “the right thing to do.” In some cases, this is true for forest firms as well. Home Depot, for example, publicly attested to FSC’s moral legitimacy through its vocal support for the program at a level above and beyond what would seem appropriate for its direct pragmatic interests. (Marx, FES521)

It is less clear whether FSC has yet developed its cognitive legitimacy. If FSC were cognitively legitimate, it would mean that the notion of operating as a timber producer *without* FSC certification would seem ridiculous or unimaginable. While this extreme is not the case, it seems

increasingly difficult for forest firms to operate without *some form* of certification, be it from FSC or one of its competitors. (FES521) Though not yet fully rejected, non-certification is growing less and less popular, and perhaps this represents a first step toward granting cognitive legitimacy to certification in general. It seems unlikely, however, that this will transfer directly into cognitive legitimacy for the FSC.

### *Two Levels of Legitimacy*

In addition to the three types of legitimacy identified by Suchman, entities may be granted legitimacy on two different levels. (Bernstein and Cashore) The first level, the “internal” level, “creates the logic through which NSMD systems gain direct authority to create policy.” (Bernstein and Cashore, 17) For the FSC, this is the arena in which firms and environmental or social groups determine whether they wish to participate in the program and what authority they will grant its leaders. The second level, the “external” level, comprises “the broad set of institutions and norms that enable and constrain an NSMD’s institutional forms and rules.” (Bernstein and Cashore, 17) This is the arena in which the larger society determines whether or not to trust or accept the NSMD program.

In the context of the FSC, these two levels play out clearly. Firms and organizations evaluate the pragmatic and moral legitimacy of FSC certification in their decisions about whether or not to become FSC members or seek certification. This takes place at the internal level. At the same time, consumers, retailers, governments, and educators judge the pragmatic, moral, and (perhaps subconsciously) cognitive legitimacy of FSC certification to determine whether they will use it in their judgments of particular forest firms or practices. This takes place at the external level. Without determinations of legitimacy at both levels, FSC certification would not be granted the authority to make social change. Luckily, FSC has been granted some degree of legitimacy at each of

these levels.

### *Gaining Legitimacy*

For the reasons discussed above, it is critical to consider legitimacy when designing an NSMD system. According to Suchman, there are three primary methods for gaining legitimacy, both internally and externally. In his words,

...legitimacy-building strategies fall into three clusters: (a) efforts to *conform* to the dictates of preexisting audiences within the organization's current environment, (b) efforts to *select* among multiple environments in pursuit of an audience that will support current practices, and (c) efforts to *manipulate* environmental structure by creating new audiences and new legitimating beliefs. (Suchman, 587)

In other words, NSMD systems may seek to conform themselves to existing norms and institutions, minimizing resistance; inform audiences about new practices without attempting to change their norms; or convert the market around them to match their norms. Of these, the most aggressive is certainly the converting strategy, which demands a sort of evangelistic action, but in most cases, NSMD systems must utilize a mixture of strategies to gain legitimacy and be successful in the market.

FSC certification was designed to make international forestry practices more environmentally and socially sustainable. Toward this end, it used a combination of legitimacy-building strategies. If the creators of the forest certification concept had not been willing to make compromises, they would have been forced to rely only on informing and converting strategies to achieve their legitimacy. They would have had to educate consumers and forest producers about best forest practices and the meaning of certification, and they would have had to shift social norms toward a greater appreciation of sustainability. This would have been very hard to do, if not impossible. Rather, these leaders recognized that before they could shift social norms on a large scale, they

would have to entrench themselves in the market, and the only way to do that would be to initially conform their principles to current norms and standards. The process of defining FSC standards was necessarily a process of compromise and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including industry representatives, non-profit groups, and indigenous peoples, all of whom were critical to granting FSC legitimacy at the internal level. (FES521) This compromise strategy was a form of conforming to seek legitimacy but was absolutely necessary for the FSC's success.

The FSC has used elements of informing and converting as well. The branding aspect of FSC certification is one example of the organization's informing strategies, and it is hoped that as FSC gains more influence and becomes more institutionalized, it will be free to pursue more overt converting strategies in its efforts to inspire social change.

Through these methods, the FSC has been able to build its pragmatic and moral legitimacy, both internally and externally. This has given it the authority to seek change within the forest sector. However, to understand how the FSC model achieved its successes, it is also crucial to consider the context in which it arose.

### The Context for the Appearance of the FSC

As a tool, certification may only be successful in the presence of a set of specific conditions, a suite of circumstances required to encourage relevant firms to participate in the program. Many have argued, for example, that given the lack of market price premiums for many certified products, the existence of brand-threatening market campaigns by outside actors have played a critical role in encouraging firms to seek certification. (Sasser, Bartley, O'Rourke 2005, Gereffi et. al.)

Furthermore, a firm's decision to seek certification is heavily influenced by the structure of the industry to which it belongs, the extent to which its reputation in the industry is held individually or

shared among other firms, and the level of threat posed to its reputation by civil society. (Sasser) In this section, I will discuss the context in which the FSC certification program appeared, describing how these factors influenced its development.

### *Brand Threats and Market Campaigns*

The market campaigns that have emerged in association with certification programs have played a critical part in securing buy-in from industry groups. (Sasser, Bartley, O'Rourke 2005, Gereffi et. al.) As O'Rourke describes,

Successful market campaigns construct networks of actors that identify points of leverage within global production and trading regimes; coordinate research, exposure, direct action, and negotiations with brands; identify solutions; advance new multi-stakeholder standards and monitoring and verification schemes; build new non-governmental regulatory institutions; and occasionally attempt to strengthen state regulation. (O'Rourke 2005, 115)

The importance of this factor must not be underestimated. As O'Rourke revealed in a personal interview, "NGOs create the demand. Through market campaigns they slam the companies. In the anti-sweatshop certification, for example, it was not the consumers who were pushing it. It was the advocacy groups who were doing the pushing. The NGOs are the real players." (O'Rourke 2006)

Brand threatening market campaigns take the form of demonstrations in front of retail stores, negative advertising, boycotts, and acts of civil disobedience. In the case of the timber sector, market campaigns were waged by a number of groups including ForestEthics, the Rainforest Action Network, Greenpeace, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. These campaigns proved essential in pressuring retailers, such as Home Depot, Staples, and Lowe's, to increase their commitments to supporting sustainable producers. Once retailers pledged to demand more certified

product, timber producers became far more interested in improving their practices and earning FSC certification. (Gereffi et. al., O'Rourke 2005)

By threatening a firm's brand, NGOs can initiate a chain of events that makes certification suddenly appear an extremely attractive and cost-effective option for maintaining market viability. As Conroy describes, a firm's attraction to formal certification is derived from the following logic: a) Firms rely deeply upon their brand images and invest heavily in them; b) The more successful a firm is at defining its brand the more vulnerable it becomes to social pressures; c) Certification programs can serve as risk reduction strategies for these firms, protecting their brand images from attack; d) Only third-party certification programs are truly credible, and thus should be the only kind of certification pursued; e) The ability of certification to decrease the threat to a firm's brand will be worth the short-term costs of seeking certification; and f) Once certified, firms should expect to receive additional benefits from the market, such as increased morale, reduced turnover, and market differentiation. (Conroy) In the face of a significant brand threat, firms are forced to turn to such programs as FSC certification to protect their positive brand images with the public. In the case of the FSC, it was the demand for certified product, created by these huge retailers, that allowed the certification program to influence the forest sector to the degree it now has.

### *Structure of Industry*

Though the influence of market campaigns on firm behaviors cannot be denied, this kind of action will affect different industries to varying degrees. One factor that determines a firm's receptivity to brand attacks is the structure of the industry to which it belongs. Because of the dependent relationship between market campaigns and certification described above, the structure of the industry to which a firm belongs can thus affect whether or not the firm is likely to accept or reject certification programs.

According to Sasser,

...the more concentrated an industry is, the more likely firms are to believe they can protect their reputation (and large market share) by moving toward certification, and the more likely they are to be able to overcome collective action barriers (if necessary) to get other firms in the industry to move in concert with them to adopt a certification institution (fewer actors makes cooperation easier). (Sasser, 5)

In other words, those industries (or parts of an industry) that are controlled by a small group of firms tend to be more vulnerable to brand attacks, and thus more likely to accept certification-style programs.

In the case of the forest sector, the most concentrated component of the industry lies in end-of-line retail distribution, the place where large distributors like Walmart, Office Depot, and Home Depot control significant portions of the market for wood-derived products. (Sasser) In contrast with forest operators and timber harvesters, retailers directly interface with individual consumers, generally cultivate highly visible brand images, and own a significant share of the product market. In these ways, their reputations are more fully exposed to market campaign attacks, making retailers key targets for increasing the demand for FSC certification.

### *Individual or Shared Reputations*

Those firms that are easily distinguished from their competitors in a market also tend to be more susceptible to brand attack campaigns. If no difference is perceived by consumers between the various firms involved in an industry, then the market distinction certification can offer will be of little use to these firms. As Sasser writes, "...the more branded a firm is, i.e. the more reputation rests with individual firms (as opposed to the collective industry), the more individual firms will feel an incentive to establish or accept a certification institution and the more likely they will receive competitive benefits from doing so." (Sasser, 5)

Since a business's incentive to participate in a certification program comes in the form of brand recognition for good practices and competitive advantage in specialized markets, it is critical that these firms be in the kind of industry in which they may be clearly distinguished from their competitors. Heavily branded firms have already invested in distinguishing themselves, and thus, these types of firms tend to have the most to gain from achieving certification.

In the case of the timber industry, once again, it is the retail superstores that tend to be most heavily branded, rather than the forest producers. This represents another reason that FSC certification has been reliant on the support of wood product retailers for its success.

### *Threat from Civil Society*

Finally, firms will only perceive a risk of brand attack if they are located in a society capable of engaging in market campaigns. For this reason, the structure of the civil society in which a firm is operating will also influence its decision to reject or embrace a certification program. If there exists within a civil society, some community of actors who are able to mobilize an aggressive campaign against a firm, actively threatening its reputation, the firm will be more likely to participate in a certification program. As Sasser describes, "When civil society is organized, and able to mobilize the public, firms will feel an extra incentive to do something to protect their reputations." (Sasser, 6)

Within the forest sector, civil society certainly *was* organized and able to mobilize the public. This is evidenced by the powerfully effective market campaigns, described above, waged on behalf of encouraging sustainable timber practices. As described, these campaigns, led by not-for-profit groups around the world, helped convince retailers to support FSC certification in the hopes of protecting their brand images. However, NGOs did not have to wage these campaigns on every retail firm to encourage them to support FSC. Once they had demonstrated that they were capable of leveraging this threat, firms began to shift their practices in anticipation of future action.

## **PART THREE: ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF PROGRESSIVE CERTIFICATION**

Now that we have analyzed the qualities and context necessary for supporting the rise of a successful NSMD certification program, we can begin to apply these lessons to the idea of a Progressive certification program. First, it is worthwhile to consider how a program like this might function.<sup>2</sup> Designed with a similar governance structure to that of the FSC, this program would seek to certify those groups, identifying as “Progressive,” that met certain standards of capacity and practice. Since this program would be intended to boost collaboration, unity, and effectiveness among Progressive groups, the standards for certification would fall into three requirement areas: commitment to a set of common Progressive principles, commitment to collaboration with other certified groups, and demonstration of organizational capacity in a few, selected skill sets. Representatives from the organizations and individuals that would likely become members of the program would be asked to convene a few times to design the program: to democratically define the specific standards of the certification program within the three focal areas, to develop strategies for evaluating whether standards have been met, and to craft policy for enforcing standards. In addition, the program would be linked with a branding campaign to let citizens (analogous to consumers in this model<sup>3</sup>) know what certification means and why they should support those groups

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<sup>2</sup> Since no attempts have yet been made to implement a political certification program, the description that follows is a theoretical construct, created for the purposes of this paper. Though an instituted certification program might look different, this model is intended to aid in the analysis of the practicality of an NSMD-style certification strategy in this context.

<sup>3</sup> In the last 40 years, the role of citizens in America has shifted from one of active participation in the democratic process to one of passive consumption of politics. This effect is described in detail in: (Wilson, Dahvi. “The American Political Marketplace: New Citizens, New Machines, New Strategies.” Working Paper, 2005. <<http://www.progressivesynergy.org/papers.htm>>). Recognizing

that have achieved certification. Since this program follows an FSC-style NSMD protocol, it will be helpful to assess the potential viability of this program according to the framework laid out in Part Two of this paper.

### Assessing the Presence of the Six Characteristics for the Success of NSMD Systems

In the previous section of this paper, we identified the six key features of an NSMD system, as defined by Bernstein and Cashore. Let us now return to these to see whether our Progressive certification program might possess or lack these qualities.

#### *Absence of State Authority*

The task of determining that Progressive organizations meet a set of collaborative standards does not lie under the auspices of government. In fact, the groups that have traditionally done the most similar work have been the political parties. In the past, parties have built strong platforms from which to run their candidates, but this behavior has been replaced in the last few decades by a focus on more candidate-centered campaigns. (Farrar-Myers and Dwyre; Aldrich; Green and Herrnson; Macedo; Cohen and Kantor; Cohen, Sorauf) On the political Right, the task has been taken up by a set of powerful strategists and funders that informally “certify” groups to determine whether they should receive money and support from the Conservative message machine.<sup>4</sup> (Hacker and Pierson, Stein, Lux 2004, Krencicki and Wilson) However, no one has yet attempted to fill this

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citizens as a form of consumer strengthens the analogy between the market harnessed by the FSC and the potential consumer market available for a Progressive certification program.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, this term is used explicitly in Hacker and Pierson’s *Off-Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*. In it, the authors state, “Even if money is not a barrier, candidates need activist allies and ground troops. And to get them, they need certification from conservative political organizations.” (Hacker and Pierson, 10)

role through a formal program, and certainly, the state itself has no authority in this area.

### *Institutionalized Governance Mechanisms*

The certification program described above is built around a strong institutional governance structure, much like that of the FSC. The certification body would be made up of a General Assembly, with three chambers to ensure equitable representation of different issue areas, a Board of Directors, and a small staff led by an Executive Director. The three General Assembly chambers would have to be carefully chosen; but they might include, for example, a political chamber, a social/environmental chamber, and a labor chamber, as these three areas would create a space for most of the Progressive advocacy groups that the body might wish to certify. The Board of Directors would be elected from the General Assembly ranks, and would possess higher governing power on a few, specific motions. Most motions would come before the entire General Assembly to be voted upon. The process for decision-making and standard development would thus be carefully regulated, allowing the certification program to remain adaptable and to distribute power fairly among its stakeholders.

### *Market-based Authority*

FSC-style certification requires that there be market-based incentives for participation. In the case of the FSC, this market comes in the form of retailer and consumer demand for sustainable wood products. In the case of a Progressive political certification program, this market is present among the donors, foundations, and philanthropists who support Progressive groups. Funders need ways to choose which charities to support, and those donors who understand the benefits of coordination among Progressive groups might be interested in preferentially supporting those groups who have demonstrated that they are working in this direction.

In fact, in the last ten years, several new funding sources have gained prominence that might be interested in supporting just this type of organizational behavior shift. These groups include the Democracy Alliance, a semi-secretive group of wealthy individuals who have promised to give \$2 million each to Progressive political groups every three years; the New Progressive Coalition, an open-source network that allows any group to publish a funding proposal for an interested donor community; the Progressive Roundtable, a gathering of leaders from throughout the Progressive community working to identify funding priorities for the movement; and the Progressive Donor Network, a group that advises donors on appropriate funding recipients. (Stein, NPC, Progressive Roundtable, Lux 2005) In addition, a new group of Progressive funders is being cultivated in the “blogsphere.” (Armstrong and Zuniga, Johnson) According to *Crashing the Gate*, as of late November 2005, “...the top seventy or so liberal blogs, led by Daily Kos, garnered about 60 million page-views every month.” (Armstrong and Zuniga, 146) The individuals present in the blogsphere are attuned to Progressive political issues, are engaged in dialogue about them, and are often quite dedicated to empowering the Progressive agenda. As Armstrong and Zuniga describe, “...by and large, the netroots are bonded not by their allegiance to any single issue, but by their belief that only a broad-based progressivism will save the nation from the destructive influences of the current administration.” (Armstrong and Zuniga, 146) Because this group understands the value of enhancing coordination among Progressive organizations, it might serve as the keystone of the market for certified organizations.

Unfortunately, the promise of this market is far from a guarantee that a strong demand for certification will be present. Traditional foundations, including many of those that fund Progressive organizations now, are not designed to promote multi-issue initiatives. Divided into clear program areas, it is hard for these foundations to support a project that does not fit cleanly into one of their boxes. (Brooks) This would make it difficult for them to either fund the development of a

certification program or use certification as a tool for identifying appropriate funding recipients. Furthermore, the notion of certification seems to be, for the most part, a bit threatening to donors and donor groups. (Brooks, Northrop, Schneider, Lux 2005, Unruh-Cohen) Much work would have to be done to convince these funders that certification is legitimate and helpful, and many do not appreciate being told who they should support with their money. Though there is strong potential that a market for Progressive certification could be developed, sufficient support is not currently present in a great enough capacity to drive this type of program. Without the guarantee that donors will demand certification, groups have much less incentive to seek it out.

One more extremely important challenge should also be mentioned in this section, the possibility of driving non-certified organizations out of the market. In the case of FSC certification, the program would be a total success if it were able to drive non-complying forest operators out of the timber market. If this were to happen, it would mean that all forest industry producers were complying with the social and environmental standards defined by the FSC, and, at least theoretically, it would mean that international forestry had become sustainable. In the case of a Progressive certification model, the goal would not be to drive non-compliant organizations out of the market. In fact, this would be a disaster. The demands and costs of collaboration may be too high for many small organizations to bear, but in many cases, these groups are still doing good work. If an organization were to be denied the funding it needed to survive simply because it could not feasibly seek certification, then the program might actually have a very detrimental effect on the movement. (Mitchell)

### *Policy Arena is the Social Domain*

A Progressive political certification program would absolutely operate in the social domain. It would seek to encourage the incorporation of a new set of shared principles into American

society. Working with a few key Progressive values, and paired with a branding campaign, certification would be designed to transform society's understanding of "Progressive" and to coordinate diverse Progressive groups around a common message.

In order to make this work, the principles around which certification standards would be built would have to be carefully identified and framed. This, on its own, is a very challenging proposition. Several efforts to develop a unified vision and core principles for Progressives are now underway, including the Principles Project of 2020 Democrats; work being done by Redefining Progress and the Center for American Progress; the Inspiring America retreats, being orchestrated by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Democrats and others; and the Spiritual Covenant with America, offered by Tikken's Network of Spiritual Progressives. (Principles Project, Gelobter, Inspiring America, NSP) If these efforts are successful, they might provide an excellent foundation from which to develop a set of Progressive certification standards, paving the way for the certification program to more powerfully affect change in the social realm.

### *Stakeholders and Broader Civil Society Part of Authority Granting Process*

One of the key qualities of a Progressive certification program would be its collaborative creation. As described above, the involvement of stakeholders in the design and maintenance of certification programs is crucial. Similarly, the standards guiding a Progressive certification program would have to be designed with the input of representatives from all of the diverse constituencies likely to be involved in the program in the future. The initial design committee would thus include representatives of the labor movement, the choice movement, the environmental movement, the social justice movement, etc. After certification standards were selected, members of the certification organization would be able to propose and vote on changes to those standards. This would keep the program responsive and adaptive to the needs of its participants. In addition,

ownership over the process, and the mutual trust that this would inspire, would help strengthen the working relationships of diverse constituents, who might not agree on all things.

### *Enforcement Mechanisms and Mandatory Requirements*

One of the valuable pieces of the proposed Progressive certification program would be its ability to enhance accountability among Progressive groups. By creating clear standards for behavior, and evaluation and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that groups were meeting them, certification would demand that compliance be demonstrated. If selected standards were to include commitment to collaboration, dedication to shared principles, and organizational capacity in certain key areas, this Progressive certification program would be the first formal attempt to both require and assess these things within the political field. This could serve to make Progressive groups more effective and efficient. In addition, if a philanthropic market for groups abiding by these principles were developed, the evaluation and enforcement qualities of certification would help donors identify those groups committed to collective action and give preferentially to them. In this way, evaluation and enforcement could also make the donor community more efficient.

Upon reflection, it seems clear that a Progressive certification program could be designed to incorporate at least five of the six required qualities of successful NSMD systems. Thus far, it appears that the lack of sufficient market demand for this program is its only significant weakness, which actually makes the notion seem quite promising. But we have not yet considered its legitimacy or the contextual conditions that might determine its ability to emerge and to thrive. Before we may draw any conclusions about the viability of this idea, we must consider these two other important factors.

## Assessing Legitimacy

As described earlier in this paper, NSMD systems like certification must develop legitimacy with their stakeholders and the public to be successful. We discussed the three types of legitimacy (pragmatic, moral, and cognitive) identified by Suchman; we described the two-levels (internal and external) of legitimacy, as defined by Bernstein and Cashore; and we outlined a few strategies for gaining legitimacy (conform, inform, convert). Now, we will consider which of these methods a Progressive certification program could use to build and preserve its legitimacy.

### *Type of Legitimacy*

Much like FSC's certification program, a Progressive certification program would seek to build pragmatic and moral legitimacy, with the hope of earning cognitive legitimacy in the future. Needless to say, with no such system now in existence, and given the hesitation of Progressive stakeholders toward creating one, this idea is currently far from possessing cognitive legitimacy in any form.

A Progressive certification program's pragmatic legitimacy would come from its ability to benefit its members. First, if the strategic coordination required by this system were well developed, the benefits to participants would be great.<sup>5</sup> Many organizations will increase their effectiveness by building the capacity required for certification, and the focus on collaboration with other groups could increase their success in advocating to the public. At the same time, collaboration could help make their operations more efficient by pooling their resources with other groups. Finally,

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<sup>5</sup> The Partnership Project ([www.saveourevironment.org](http://www.saveourevironment.org)), a long-standing coalition of the 23 largest environmental groups in the nation, has demonstrated that many valuable benefits do accrue to groups working strategically together on behalf of shared principles. (Sease, Schlickeisen, Meadows, Waterman.)

coalitional strategies could offer groups many opportunities for organizing that do not exist when groups are working autonomously.

In addition, donors would see the pragmatic legitimacy of this type of program, because it would help them invest their money with groups more likely to achieve success. The guarantee offered by a certification program that specific procedural standards are being met could provide a level of comfort and security to philanthropic agents that they do not currently possess.

Furthermore, Progressive certification could earn moral legitimacy as well. If left-leaning citizens came to see the principles and standards defined by the certification body as appropriate moral imperatives (i.e. “the right thing to do”), they would be more likely to take the certification distinction seriously. This becomes a crucial factor in the branding campaign being proposed in conjunction with certification. In part, the success of the certification program would be marked by an increased public understanding of what “Progressive” means, and a growing sense that acting on behalf of Progressive principles is morally righteous.

Unfortunately, thus far, the notion of a Progressive certification program has been met with some degree of hesitation and discomfort. This reaction suggests that the idea does not currently possess either pragmatic or moral legitimacy in the eyes of its potential stakeholders. Interviews with several Progressive organizers, donors, and think tank strategist reveal deep concerns about the costs of participating in this kind of program, a significant skepticism about the potential benefits, and a strong uneasiness with saying that the program is morally righteous.<sup>6</sup> Thus, though it may be possible for a Progressive certification program to develop pragmatic and moral legitimacy over time, it appears that it currently possesses neither.

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<sup>6</sup>These opinions were gathered through over 90 personal interviews with subjects from multiple sectors of the Progressive community, including the heads of non-profits, campaign directors, grassroots organizers, foundation officers, donor group leaders, think tank strategists, academics, and reporters. For a specific list of individuals, please contact the author.

### *Level of Legitimacy*

A Progressive certification program would also need to build legitimacy at both internal and external levels. Internally, this would mean being deemed legitimate by the organizations it would seek to certify, the donors that would serve as its market, and perhaps those serving as marketing or strategic advisors. Externally, this would mean developing the notion among American citizens that being certified by this body was a meaningful and positive distinction. Currently, as described above, it appears that neither organizations, Progressive leaders, nor donors would feel comfortable granting legitimacy to a Progressive certification program.<sup>7</sup> It is also not at all clear how being identified as “certified Progressive” would influence citizen support for the movement.<sup>8</sup> It thus seems that the idea of a program in Progressive certification currently lacks sufficient legitimacy to succeed on either level.

### *Gaining Legitimacy*

Given its current state of illegitimacy, designers of a Progressive certification program might want to employ some of the strategies for gaining legitimacy discussed earlier in this paper. Though they would probably prefer to use informing and converting strategies to do so, they might have to be satisfied with a conforming strategy.

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<sup>7</sup> It seems worth noting here that programs may not be able to gain legitimacy before they actually come into existence. If this is the case, then it is as of yet impossible to know whether a program like this would ever be granted legitimacy in the future. As described above, it seems that rationale does exist for deeming a Progressive certification program pragmatically and morally legitimate on both levels.

<sup>8</sup> According to some sources, a new level of citizen engagement is emerging from the “netroots.” (Johnson, Armstrong and Zuniga) It seems possible that this might provide the kind of sophisticated understanding of the Progressive coordination problem to inspire citizen support for a certification program in this area.

As a technical “certification program,” rather than a labeling or “seal of approval” program, the proposed system would be aggressive in its attempts to change the norms of society around it. The program would work to convert the behavioral norms of Progressive organizations by forcing them to work together and seek common ground. It would also aim to convert the public towards greater support of Progressive values and principles.

However, this program is also designed to use an informing strategy. The program would launch a Progressive branding campaign, in association with certification, to educate the public about the meaning of the term “Progressive,” the moral justification for choosing Progressive principles, and the implications and value of the certification distinction. In addition, the certification program would seek to gain legitimacy by informing organizations about a new way of doing business and inspiring them with a new vision.

Despite the desires of its creators to make change, were this program to be initiated, it would, in all likelihood, rely very heavily upon some conforming strategies to get up and running. Most conforming would probably take place in the form of compromises during the creation of certification standards. To be accepted by the somewhat apathetic public or the highly sensitive donor community, this program would need to adapt its standards, to some extent, to match the expectations, norms, and understandings of these groups.

Though it appears that a Progressive certification program could some day be deemed legitimate, it seems clear that the idea is not currently being taken very seriously by the Progressive community. This does not bode well for the emergence of such a program in the immediate future. However, we still have one more set of conditions to consider, and these will help us determine, at last, whether a Progressive certification program could be successfully initiated today.

## Assessing the Context for the Appearance of a Progressive Certification Program

Considering the conditions under which FSC's forest certification program was able to succeed, it is worthwhile to consider whether these conditions currently exist in the political context. On the positive side, the time seems ripe for new innovations in Progressive organizing. Since the 2004 elections, there has been broad interest in building a stronger movement and a more cohesive Progressive community. Many related projects are now underway (see Appendix A), and a great deal of money is now being dedicated to increasing the Progressive influence in American society. At the same time, Progressive organizations are becoming more comfortable with working together. It seems that this may largely be due to their perception of urgency, their awareness of the coordination of the Conservative Right, and a few early efforts at strategic integration, such as America Votes 2004. (Pope)

On the other hand, some of the conditions that were central to the success of the FSC program do not exist in the case of Progressive certification. Considering the structure of the Progressive political "industry" in the context of Sasser's theory, the chances that organizations will accept a certification system look slim. First of all, the Progressive "industry" does not concentrate power in the hands of a few. Rather, Progressive organizations are diverse and diffuse, and Progressive values demand that they stay this way. Furthermore, it is unclear whether an organization's reputation in the movement is held individually by that organization or shared among organizations. Though particular organizations must brand themselves to remain viable in the competitive market for funding, they tend to be linked together within their issue areas, diminishing the convenience of threatening any single one of them. Finally, unlike the brand threats waged on major retailers of wood products, civic challenges are highly unlikely to be applied to those Progressive organizations that do not comply with the collaboration-oriented standards suggested

for this form of certification. Launching into a negative brand campaign against any Progressive group would probably do more to hurt the movement than to benefit it, even if the organization under attack had decided not to pursue certification.

Perhaps most concerning of all, however, is the fact that there appears to be no real analogue in the political context for the critical pressure exerted by advocacy groups and market campaigns in the forestry sector. Since neither donor groups, nor foundations, nor the organizations themselves are actively pushing for this kind of solution, the absence of market pressure may be the deathblow to this program. Until there is significant organizational buy-in to this type of solution, or until there is increased market pressure for this kind of program from donors, foundations, or citizens, it is unlikely that a Progressive certification program will be able to emerge.

## **CONCLUSIONS: Would a Certification Program for Progressive Coordination Be Successful?**

Based on the analysis conducted above, it seems unlikely that a Progressive certification program could work in the current political context. Though it is quite imaginable that an FSC-style certification program could be crafted to include most of the six NSMD characteristics deemed necessary by Bernstein and Cashore, the notion does not currently have sufficient legitimacy or the necessary supporting contextual conditions to emerge and succeed. The Progressive certification program described in this paper was designed to function as an NSMD system, outside of state authority, ruled by an institutionalized governance structure, operating in the social domain, involving stakeholders in decision-making, possessing enforcement mechanisms, and, to some degree, deriving its authority from the market. However, it does not yet appear pragmatically,

morally, or cognitively legitimate, either internally or externally, and it would probably require a fair amount of compromise (conforming strategy) to become acceptable to Progressive groups, citizens, and donors. Finally, the Progressive advocacy “industry” is not well structured to encourage the creation of a certification program within it. The lack of significant market differentiation, the insubstantial presence of market demand for certification, and the threat of hurting the movement through negative brand campaigns, suggest that the incentives are simply not aligned correctly to encourage organizational participation in a Progressive certification program.

Because market pressure for Progressive certification is lacking, the cost-benefit calculation for organizational participation is skewed heavily towards the costs. The costs of seeking certification could include the potential autonomy costs of committing to work on behalf of broad principles, the potential brand cost of losing individuality in the eyes of members and donors, the staff time and energy of participating in required group strategy meetings, as well as specific logistical costs such as audit fees.

Furthermore, the certification tool itself evokes strong concerns over authoritarianism and loss of power among Progressive groups. Interview subjects reported that they would be uncomfortable being forced to support campaigns that fell outside of their particular missions, that their boards would not approve of membership in such a broad coalition, and that they overwhelmingly feared being forced to neglect issues that they believed to be undeniably urgent. Even worse, many expressed the concern that for those groups unable to seek certification for one reason or another, certification would encourage funders discriminate against them, potentially driving them out of the advocacy market and condemning their issues to inactivity.

Thus, although the benefits of participation might very well include increased effectiveness, efficiency, and electoral victory for Progressive causes, these diffuse benefits would not appear great

enough to outweigh the costs of participation. In a sense, this is a classic collective action problem.

According to Mancur Olson, father of collective action analysis,

If the members of a large group rationally seek to maximize their personal welfare, they will *not* act to advance their common or group objectives unless there is coercion to force them to do so, or unless some separate incentive, distinct from the achievement of the common or group interest, is offered to the members of the group individually on the condition that they help bear the costs or burdens involved in the achievement of the group objectives... These points hold true even when there is unanimous agreement in a group about the common good and the methods of achieving it. (Olson, 2)

Even if all Progressive groups agreed (which they currently do not) that the promise of presenting a more unified identity to the American public, increasing efficiency of their resource use, enhancing their strategic coordination and messaging, and distributing funding more effectively, represented a “common good,” they might still fail to pursue these ends due to the direct costs they would bear individually for doing so. Without “separate incentives” so great as to make non-compliance irrational, organizations will most likely choose not to take on the costs of this activity to create a common benefit, even one as tremendous as electoral and societal victory. Unfortunately, as this analysis attempts to show, the incentives offered by a Progressive certification program like the one proposed, are simply not great enough to encourage this kind of change.

## Appendix A: Some Current Progressive Efforts to Build a More Cohesive Movement

*The Commonwealth Institute-* The Commonwealth Institute is a think tank that seeks to maximize the visibility and the power of progressive ideas and values. From environmental protection to racial justice, from religious tolerance to economic security, the Commonwealth Institute promotes fundamental American ideals of community, responsibility, and fairness. The Commonwealth Institute is interested in building a Progressive infrastructure. (Commonweal)

*The Progressive Roundtable-* (A project of the Commonwealth Institute) The Progressive Roundtable website is a resource and meeting place for those involved in the communication and marketing of progressive ideas. The Progressive Roundtable recently held a gathering of Progressive leaders to discuss project priorities for building a stronger Progressive movement. (Progressive Roundtable, Johnson, Forrest)

*Center for American Progress-* The Center for American Progress (CAP) is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. It believes that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and it aspires to ensure that national policies reflect these values. CAP seems to be working to establish itself as a coordinating center for the Progressive movement. (CAP, Unruh-Cohen)

*Redefining Progress-* Redefining Progress is a nonpartisan organization based in Oakland, California, that works to shift the economy and public policy towards sustainability. It is working on helping to organize a gathering of Progressive think tank leaders to determine whether any unifying Progressive principles exist, and to identify them if they do. (RP, Gelobter)

*Inspiring America-* Inspiring America is network of visionary leaders committed to creating and fulfilling a compelling vision for America that ignites a new movement and unleashes the power and passion of the American people. The non-profit is a source of leadership development, empowerment and support for visionary leaders committed to creating and fulfilling on the vision. Its work is commencing with three retreats that will provide 150 diverse leaders with the freedom to create an audaciously, compelling vision for America that inspires them and thousands of others to action. (Inspiring America)

*America Votes-* America Votes is a coalition of many of the largest membership-based groups in the country, who have come together to increase voter registration, education and participation in electoral politics. This historic partnership represents a combined membership of more than 20 million Americans in every state in the country. (America Votes)

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