

Democratic Group Forms a Coalition Against 'New Left'

12/7/72 By George Lardner Jr.
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Contending that liberals have fallen into bad company, a group of Democrats vowed to set them right yesterday with a new organization that "rejects strongly the politics of the New Left."

Members of the embryonic group, which has adopted the title of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, outlined their goals at a press conference signaling the start of their first formal organizing drive.

"We have major disagreements with the so-called 'New Politics' liberals," said Ben J. Wattenberg, a founder of the group. Its goals, he said, would bet o rescue liberalism — and the Democratic Party — from the slump reflected in Sen. George McGovern's presidential candidacy.

Ads in today's editions of The Washington Post and The New York Times, headlined "Come Home, Democrats," elaborate on the plans in an appeal for charter members.

The liberal establishment has been represented for years by the Americans for Democratic Action, but Wattenberg maintained that the ADA is too mired in the elitism distasteful to the "common-sense liberals" of the new coalition group.

"If there's a splinter group in the liberal community," Wattenberg said, "it's the ADA."

The ADA's national director, Leon Shull, responded in kind.

"I wish them godspeed to a well earned oblivion," Shull said later in the day. "How they can call themselves in the mainstream of American liberalism boggles my imagination. I think they've got their definitions all mixed up."

Wattenberg said the coali-

Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.), who would like to see Strauss elected.

Wattenberg said, however, that the coalition is more interested in pushing for substantive changes, such as an end to the "quota system" of picking Democratic convention delegates, that can help restore the party "to its rightful role as spokesman for the majority of the American people."

The coalition's ads, which cost some \$14,000, list a 10-member organizing committee and 71 sponsors, including top officials of the United Rubber Workers, the United Steelworkers, the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, the Textile Workers of America, the Brotherhood of Painters, the United Federation of Teachers of New York, and the Botherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

A former aide to Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) and co-author of the book, "The Real Majority," Wattenberg said the coalition includes many supporters of the Democratic presidential campaigns of Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) and Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) as well as Jackson's.

"Our group is not ideologically comfortable with either of the Georges," he said of McGovern and Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace.

The cost of the advertising campaign, Wattenberg said, came from "a multiplicity of sources," including labor, and largely depleted the coalition's presently modest treasury. Most of the labor money, he said, came from the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE).

The coalition's precise activities have yet to be settled on, but Wattenberg said they may include publication of voting records as viewed by coalition standards, in the same way ADA and COPE do; establishment of local chapters, and endorsement of political candidates.

He said the group would also attempt to play an active role in the formulation of the Democratic Party charter that is to be drafted by a special commission of the Democratic National Committee.

tion is taking no stand on the upcoming fight for the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee, but acknowledged that it would favor the ouster of Jean Westwood, who was named to the job by McGovern last July. The coalition's organizing committee includes AFL-CIO political consultant Bob Keefe, one of the chief strategists of Texas lawyer Robert Strauss' campaign for the chairmanship, and others, such as Washington attorney Max Kampelman and Rep.