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November 30, 2014: More Reasons the Democratic Party Coalition Collapsed

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Title: More Reasons the Democratic Party Coalition Collapsed

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11/30/2014—I was listening to a radio interview of Bill Pricener on Christian radio yesterday. Bill is the Director of the Allegheny branch of the YMCA. The branch is right on my street and I use it almost every day. It became clear that Bill and the interviewer are more concerned about poverty and hunger in America, especially among young people, than just about anyone I have ever known. Bill spends his life attempting to alleviate hunger and poverty. This is not, for Bill, any kind of antigovernment crusade. The YMCA is happy to take federal government dollars in order to assist it in providing food for kids. Bill is particularly concerned to make sure the kids have food during the day so that they can learn. Bill and the interviewer were very critical of a society like ours in which people still go hungry. Yet, not only do I doubt that participants in the interview regularly vote Democratic, we know for a fact that most of the listeners to the interview do not. They vote Republican. We also know that generally speaking people like Bill, and people like the listeners to Christian radio, who speak in gospel terminology--they talk about mission, God, purpose, and so forth--are not welcome among many progressives. These progressives are made uncomfortable by the language of faith and by the fact of faith. So we have this strange situation in which people who share a deep concern for social justice find themselves on opposite sides of a political divide that does not reflect all of their concerns. This weakens the possibility of creating a coalition in America in which issues like hunger are effectively addressed. There would be huge support from progressives and many people of faith for a massive expansion of government programs that provide food in the schools, including taxes to pay for it. But it cannot happen because of a cultural divide. I mostly fault progressives here because we indulge our distaste for religious life though such religious commitments are often irrelevant to commitments of politics and policy. Progressives should be reaching out to Catholics and Protestants who share a lot of general commitments with progressives, and even share some very specific policy positions. Why should it be necessary that everybody agree about abortion and gay marriage in order to do something about hunger?