



## People's Party National Convention Collection (S0063)

**Collection Number:** S0063

**Collection Title:** People's Party National Convention Collection

**Dates:** 1972, 1975

**Creator:** Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, 1943-2011

**Abstract:** The People's Party was founded in 1971 and influenced left-wing politics in the United States through 1976. The party held two of their national conventions in St. Louis, Missouri in 1972 and 1975. Convention delegates adopted platforms representing their stances on equal rights, healthcare for all, and peace in Vietnam. In 1972, the prominent pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock ran as their candidate for President of the United States, and activist Margaret Wright ran as the candidate in 1976. The collection contains convention literature, campaign fliers, platforms, newspaper clippings, three oral history interviews, and a recording of a press conference featuring Dr. Spock.

**Collection Size:** 0.8 cubic feet  
(9 folders, 2 oral history transcripts, 1 reel-to-reel audio tape, 1 audiocassette tape)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. Audiotapes require the use of equipment available in the research center. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [stlouis@shsmo.org](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org).

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *People's Party National Convention Collection* (S0063); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Saint Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Saint Louis].

**Donor Information:** The collection was created by Western Historical Manuscripts Collection staff members (Accession No. SA0143).

**Alternate Forms Available:** Archival WAV files of digitized audiotapes in this collection are in offline digital storage.

**Separated Materials:** For preservation purposes the People's Party National Convention Collection audiotapes and transcripts are stored with the Oral History Collection (S0829) at the St. Louis Research Center. T-210 is in S0829, Box 003. T-209 and T-205 are in S0829, Box 021. T-206 is in S0829, Box 006. An oral history interview with Dan Brogan is in S0829, Box 015. Archival WAV files of digitized audiotapes are in offline SHSMO digital storage.

**Related Materials:** Additional materials related to the People's Party National Convention Collection can be found in the following collections:

*Crawdad Alliance Records* (S0079)

*New Democratic Coalition Records*, (S0068)

*Oral History Collection* (S0829, T-672, Committee for Environmental Education Oral History, interview with Dan Brogan)

**Processed by:** Processed by Irene Cortinovic, 1976. Reprocessed by Erin Purdy, August 2022.

### **Historical Note:**

The People's Party (not to be confused with the People's Party/Populist Party, 1892-1909) was a socialist, radical, left-wing political party founded in 1971. The People's Party consisted of autonomous national, state, and local parties working to provide radical alternatives to the Democratic and Republican parties. These parties included the Peace and Freedom Party, the Human Rights Party (Ann Arbor, Michigan), and the Liberty Union Party (Vermont; now known as the Green Mountain Peace and Justice Party).

The People's Party National Convention was held at the St. Louis Gateway Hotel from July 26 to 30, 1972. The Saint Louis Chapter of the Peace and Freedom Party coordinated and hosted the event. Roughly 200 delegates attended. The delegates nominated an official presidential candidate, held committee meetings and presentations, and adopted official party platforms.

The most publicized activity of the People's Party was their nomination of Dr. Benjamin Spock for President of the United States. Dr. Spock (1903-1998) was best-known for his work as a pediatrician and his book, *Baby and Child Care* (1946). He became an anti-war and social welfare activist in the 1960s before becoming involved in the formation of the People's Party and campaigning as their first presidential nominee. Dr. Spock began campaigning across the country even before his official nomination in St. Louis, and paid for his campaign himself. Activist and politician Julius Hobson (1922-1977) was the vice-presidential nominee, but due to terminal cancer he was unable to actively campaign.

The People's Party did not seriously expect that Dr. Spock would win the Democratic nomination or the national election; instead, their intention was to draw attention to more radical left-wing issues and to encourage the Democratic nominee, Senator George McGovern, to support more left-wing causes rather than presenting himself as a centrist candidate. Some of the delegates at the 1972 national convention in St. Louis believed that party members should vote for McGovern to prevent Richard Nixon from winning the election, while others believed that the support should be conditional, or withheld entirely. The question of supporting McGovern's

campaign became a major point of contention at convention, and the disagreements over the matter led to delegates from Kentucky leaving early.

At the 1972 national convention, committee members discussed various issues and adopted official platforms. There were committees on ageism, sexism, and racism, as well as on healthcare, governance and politics, foreign policy, labor, and economics. The party believed in everyone being able to participate, regardless of age, and the children of the delegates served on the Children's Liberation Caucus.

The healthcare platform included healthcare for all and medical equity, specifically citing the need for reproductive rights and ending racial disparities in medical care. The party also adopted platforms dedicated to eliminating discrimination against people due to their age, race, gender, or sexuality. The labor rights platform included guaranteeing a minimum wage, a reduced workweek, and the right to unionize. The party's economic justice platform included issues like the elimination of loopholes for corporations. The party's stance on foreign policy was centered on pacifism. The party wanted peace in Vietnam and the withdrawal of troops from all foreign countries.

After the 1972 national convention, the People's Party was marginally successful as a third party, but did not gain popular support from more conservative Democrats and Republicans. The People's Party failed to collect the two million signatures necessary for a new party to have their candidate appear on the ballot in all fifty states. This created a barrier to success, and Spock was write-in candidate in the majority of states, and appeared on the ballot in only ten states.

The People's Party 1975 National Convention convened August 25 through September 1 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, J.C. Penney Building. Dan Brogan, a student participating in the University Year for Action (UYA) program at UMSL, coordinated the event.

At the 1975 convention, the People's Party nominated Margaret Wright (1922-1996) as a candidate for President of the United States in the 1976 election, with Spock as her vice-presidential running mate. Margaret Wright was a socialist who was active in the anti-war movement, civil rights, education, and feminism in Los Angeles, California. She founded the United Parents Council, Women Against Oppression, and Women Against Racism. Wright also worked with the NAACP and the St. Louis Board of Education, and she served on the board of the LA Black Congress and on the board of KVST television network.

Wright and Spock's campaign in 1975 attracted even less publicity and less financial support than the 1972 campaign. Another sign of the waning influence of the People's Party was that on the ballots, Wright was listed as the People's Party candidate in some states, but in Michigan was listed as the Human Rights Party candidate and in California was listed as the Peace and Freedom Party candidate.

The People's Party's final national convention was held in New York from November 25 to 27, 1977, where the affiliated organizations considered dissolving the party and individually merging with the larger Socialist Party.

During the two conventions held in St. Louis, staff from the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection (WHMC) at UMSL collected oral history interviews and other materials associated with the People's Party. These materials constituted the basis of the People's Party National

Convention Collection. The project was a subject of WHMC Director Irene Cortinovis' article, "Documenting an Event with Manuscripts and Oral History" (The Oral History Review, 1973). In 1975, UMSL student and Peace and Freedom Party member Dan Brogan participated in a work-study program where he served as one of the organizers of the national convention. Brogan also conducted oral history interviews with convention participants.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following 2 series:

Convention Materials  
Audio Recordings

**Scope and Content Note:****Convention Materials**

This series contains materials related to the People's Party national conventions held in St. Louis in 1972 and 1975. Included are fliers from Dr. Richard Spock's 1972 presidential campaign, and a flier for John Blaine's campaign to become Secretary of Arts for the People's Party. This series contains two *Grass Roots* newsletters, the national publication of the People's Party, from 1972. The materials from the 1975 national convention include a guide to the St. Louis Area compiled by the St. Louis Peace and Freedom Party, and reports by a convention organizer, Dan Brogan.

The platform materials include papers on free healthcare for all, medical equity, LGBTQ rights, a federal minimum wage, a reduced workweek, the right to unionize, elimination of tax loopholes for corporations, rights for senior citizens, stricter ecological legislation, and the withdrawal of troops from foreign countries.

This series contains a draft of a resolution for "conditional support" of George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign. In this resolution, the People's Party states that they will have their own presidential candidates, but in the November election encourage their members to vote for McGovern against Richard Nixon under the condition that McGovern maintain his platform of withdrawing U.S. forces from foreign countries and creating a "Program for Peace, Jobs and Justice."

The materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

**Audio Recordings**

This series contains oral history interviews conducted in 1972 by WHMC staff and the UMSL department of history. Interviewees include Charles Briody, Charles Avery III, and John William Hirzy. It also includes a recording of a round table or press conference featuring Dr. Benjamin Spock and Julius Hobson held at 4PM on July 28, 1972.

Chuck Avery was the National Secretary for the People's Party in 1972 and his interview topics include the party's affiliate organizations, conditional support for the Democratic candidate George McGovern, Dr. Spock and Julius Hobson, and the 1972 national convention. The collection includes a transcript of his interview, which was conducted by Dan Brogan on July 31, 1972

Charles Briody III was National Chairman of the party in 1972, and his interview topics include the Peace and Freedom Party, the goal of influencing the Democratic Party platform to become more radical, the founding of the People's Party in Albuquerque and Dallas, lack of press coverage, and the creation of the party's platforms. The collection includes a transcript of his interview, which was conducted by UMSL professors Dr. Jerry Cooper and Dr. Dave Kathka on July 26, 1972.

St. Louis environmentalist John William Hirzy was the secretary of the People's Party of Missouri. Hirzy was nominated for St. Louis Metro chairman of the National Democratic Committee in February 1972, but left to join the People's Party. Interview topics include the proceedings at the national convention, the localized nature of the party's affiliate parties, and the Kentucky delegate's support of McGovern, the a decision to form correspondence committees, and Missouri politics. Hirzy's interview is 21 minutes long and was conducted by Dan Brogan on July 29, 1972.

The materials in this series are arranged by format and identification number.

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|               | f. 3                 | Statement of conditional support for the George McGovern presidential campaign, 1972  |
|               | f. 4                 | Benjamin Spock campaign fliers, John Blaine flier, Loitz Tax Reform flier 1972  |
|               | f. 5                 | Two issues of Grass Roots newsletter, 1972  |
|               | f. 6                 | Newspaper clippings, 1972   |
|               | f. 7                 | Reports by Dan Brogan on the People's Party National Convention, 1975   |
|               | f. 8                 | Guide to the St. Louis Area for the People's Party National Convention, by the St. Louis Peace and Freedom Party, 1975                      |
|               | f. 9                 | Copies of Oral history transcripts, 1972  |
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| S0829 Box 006 | T-206                | T-206 (1 audiocassette tape) Recording of press conference with Dr. Benjamin Spock and Julius Hobson, July 28, 1972                         |
| S0829 Box 021 | T-209                | T-209 Transcript of oral history interview of Chuck Avery, interviewed by Dan Brogan on July 31, 1972                                       |
| S0829 Box 003 | T-210                | T-210 (1 reel to reel audio tape) Oral history interview of John William Hirzy, interviewed by Dan Brogan on July 29, 1972                  |

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