

Why Not Sanders? He's "Far Too Risky"

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*An article on CNN on February 25 discusses the fear and apprehension of 'moderate' Democrats about the possibility of Vermont **Senator Bernie Sanders** winning the Democratic presidential nomination. "This is playing into Trump's hands!" they lament. "Downstream candidates will be adversely impacted" they moan. They wring their hands and proclaim that "The Party will lose the House!"*

They all say that Sanders is far too risky. Democrats must nominate some middle-of-the-road, namby-pamby, white, male candidate to oppose Trump. That, they state, is the only possibility of victory.

Perhaps not. In 2008, the Party stepped outside of its old, white, male box and nominated Illinois Senator Barack Obama. He galvanized the party, motivating millions to volunteers to work on his campaign, and generating excitement for a candidate not seen in decades. He defeated an aging, white, middle-of-the-road senator (John McCain of Arizona). How excited do the current Democratic Sanders-naysayers think anyone is going to get about, say, Joe Biden? Will his crowded rallies be energized by feelings of electrified excitement? Will his venues be filled with the young and old, and racially-mixed throngs who are excited just to be in his presence? When pigs fly.

Perhaps a better alternative is billionaire and former New York City mayor Mike Bloomberg. He could, the pundits say, go head-to-head with the (alleged) billionaire Trump. But Bloomberg carries his own racist, sexist and elitist baggage. The 'stop and frisk' policies instituted when he was mayor, and his clear statements that, as mayor, he had to put most of the police in minority neighborhoods, because that's where most of the crime occurs, will not sit well not only with minority voters, but with any voters who believe in equality and justice. He also blamed the 2008 economic melt-down at least partly on the end of redlining, the illegal practice of denying housing loans to people in minority neighborhoods. And his blatantly sexist statements to female co-workers, suggesting that they provide oral sex to a male co-worker who was soon to marry, as a 'gift' to him, and commenting 'kill it' when one woman announced her pregnancy, border on the behaviors for which Trump has been criticized. So, maybe Bloomberg isn't the right alternative to Sanders.

Popular these days is former South Bend Indiana mayor Pete Buttigieg. He is about as middle-of-the-road as Biden, but young enough to be his grandson, so less entrenched in the 'swamp' than Grandpa Biden. Perhaps passion, which Sanders demonstrates with every statement and Buttigieg seems not to have at all, isn't necessary to be president; the facts, figures and statistics that Buttigieg is fond of discussing are, of course, of vital importance in running any government. But they don't motivate voters. And, of course, like Biden, Buttigieg is a Zionist, so his disdain for international law and human rights should

automatically disqualify him.

Trying to bridge the gap between revolutionary change and centrist is Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren. She has moved far to the left to be seen as an alternative to Sanders, but her campaign seems to be dying a slow and painful death.

And then we have the proud Zionist, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. She had an 'impressive' (?) third-place showing in New Hampshire, which she had seized upon as the beginning of the end for Sanders, Warren, Buttigieg, etc. Unfortunately for her but for no one else, she slipped into sixth place in Nevada, garnering less than 9% of the number of votes Sanders received.

There are a few important lessons to take from the 2016 election. First, people wanted change, and that was hardly represented by Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Second, polarizing candidates with trainloads of baggage are not viable alternatives to even the most reprehensible opponents. Third, Democratic voters do not like to see their party behaving in a most un-democratic way, as it did in 2016 when it cooked the books in a variety of ways to ensure that Clinton was the nominee.

What can be learned from this? Well, let's write off Bloomberg right now. His racist and sexist statements and policies should automatically disqualify him. And we have already seen the 'wonders' that an (alleged) billionaire businessman can do as president. Does anyone really want more of the same?

We also learn that Democrats want an honest primary season, where candidates are given the same level of support by the Democratic National Committee, and where the DNC doesn't manipulate things to favor one or the other (yes, we are talking about you, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz).

Mostly, we learn that Democrats want change. How much change Sanders actually represents remains to be seen (like most elected officials, he has seldom seen a U.S. war he hasn't liked, Iraq being an exception, but his reasoning for voting against that war was hardly a denunciation of it; that is a topic for a different essay). But they are excited about a candidate who talks about universal health care, protecting the environment, establishing an almost-livable minimal wage, cutting aid to Israel and giving it to Palestine. They feel a sense of refreshment that, perhaps, they can vote for a candidate for president who knows, and perhaps even cares, that people like them - working class, struggling - exist.

Some pundits look back to 1972 and the disastrous landslide victory of incumbent Richard Nixon over South Dakota Senator George McGovern. But one must remember that, going into that election, Nixon was a popular president; no poll ever showed McGovern even close to him in the race, let alone defeating him. Such is not the case today, when Trump's popularity is hovering around 50%, the highest of his entire term, and head-to-head matchups between him and Sanders consistently show Sanders as victorious.

The next series of primaries will indicate whether or not Sanders maintains his front-runner status, and if those would-be candidates who drop out will endorse him. And while a Sanders presidency would certainly not institute the level of change that his most ardent supporters hope for, it would represent a significant redirection of U.S. foreign and domestic policy. And that is something that every Democrat should support.

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