

COME THE REVOLUTION, COME THE ELECTIONS



A poet (who was also a retired investment banker) once told me that he wanted to invest in virtual casino gambling, because people would lose their money and still think they had won. That's what happened with the convergence of the electorate and the virtual world of social media in the election of 2016.

Some people are still saying Trump's presidency will lead the country to revolution. (Some also still believe that Assange is a hero of the left, even as it is now clear that he is an active operative for Putin's new fascist Russia.) If the U. S. were ever to have an authentic revolution, it would have been in the Depression 30s or the late 60s. It didn't even happen when the American working class in the 30s was clear on who the enemy was. And it didn't happen in the 60s when there was a huge mobilization against the Vietnam War. Our current Resistance is great, but it is not a revolution.

The Democrats have been pilloried by almost everyone for "deserting the white working class." Enough with the trashing of the Democratic party. It is the only progressive party that can give us positive outcomes, as opposed to functioning as a spoiler. The Democrats didn't abandon the unions, the union members left them, chasing after Reagan's Cadillac-

driving Welfare Queens. Why pay union dues when your President will take care of you? One of the biggest contributions to wealth inequality in this country is the abandonment of unions by their membership or potential membership. In the last years of the 70s, at the height of their power, union members in Michigan were buying summer homes.

Every single progressive advance in the last 75 years—from FDR's New Deal to Truman's Fair Deal to LBJ's Medicare, Medicaid, Civil/Voting Rights laws to Obama's ACA—have come from the Democratic party. And the Republicans have fought them at every turn. The GOP has dreamed of nullifying all of it and now you see them trying to make that dream a reality. This crisis would not have been possible if it weren't for an unwitting 2016 coalition of angry blue-collar workers and political progressives who (stoked by a horde of Russian internet trolls in St. Petersburg) decided that Hillary Clinton was the Apocalypse.

Facebook posts asking if you agree that Trump is horrible (vote yes or no) and even Tom Steyer's impeachment campaign may make us feel good, but they have absolutely no effect on our current existential crisis. Only one thing counts. If

in November 2018 there are more members of the new Congress with Ds after their names than Rs, we will be able to move forward. Otherwise nothing positive can happen. If we flip the Congress, then the Resistance needs to put enormous pressure on the Ds, especially reluctant ones, to keep them in line. That's the way an agenda becomes the law of the land. We can't declare victory and go home. For those holding out for "ideological purity," let me remind you that none of the aforementioned presidents who created the progressive agenda of the 20th century were considered lefties. Their work was about doing what was right and possible.

In his victory speech of 2008, Barack Obama reminded the jubilant audience in Lincoln Park that the battle was just beginning and he needed our help. The vested interests that blocked national health care and many other things would not give up without a fight. But we cheered and went home, hoping he would take care of it. It is important to remember that Obama wanted a "single payer option" for the insurance exchanges. That was blocked, not by the Republicans, but a few Democrats who were in the pocket of the insurance industry, most notably senators Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Joe Lieberman of

Connecticut. If the Resistance had descended on Washington, D. C. then as it did this past summer, the ACA would have been what Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have called for. Obama knew that Medicare for all was impossible at the time. But he thought that the single payer option would put the country “on a glide path” to that eventuality. And let me also add that health care has never been free, either here or in Europe. You pay for it in taxes (the taxes paid by Scandinavians would make any American choke) or out of pocket. Yes, Medicare for all would be great. I have Medicare. It costs me almost \$400 a month, including my medigap policy and the drug Part D. I’m not complaining. It is excellent insurance, but it is not free!

The way forward for a united progressive movement was demonstrated in the Virginia election

of 2017. Tom Perez, the DNC chairman, was shrewd enough to remember what Howard Dean accomplished in 2006, flipping the congress from Republican to Democratic. Dean did that by recruiting excellent candidates and competing in all 50 states, a strategy that requires financial commitment as well as an energized grass roots that is willing to campaign vigorously. In Virginia, Perez recruited a great slate of candidates, with a large number of women. He organized, raised money, and oversaw the real work that wins elections—phone banks and door-knocking. (Facebook, Twitter, and the like have their uses, but they cannot replace time-tested physical, real time commitments.) The result of all that work was a landslide victory for the Democrats, up and down the ballot. Interestingly, Ed Gillespie, the Republican candidate for governor,

got a record number of votes. But the Democratic candidate, Ralph Northam, bested him by 9%! That just means progressive Virginians got up off their butts and got the job done.

Let us stop litigating the 2016 election. Hillary Clinton will never run again. And I hope that Bernie Sanders will consider that option as well. It’s time to encourage younger candidates, who more fully reflect the spectrum of our society, to rise up and seize the moment. And do not think that it is inevitable that Trump will be impeached, even if Robert Mueller produces damning evidence. Getting the congress back from the corrupt, predatory Republican party is the only way to set things right. It’s time for the rest of us to get off social media, roll up our sleeves, put on our walking shoes and get to work! Not next summer, but now!

