

Medicare for All

by Bill Herbst

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For the moment, I'm done talking about Republicans. Yes, they're engaged in the almost comic lunacy of disputing the election by mounting an onslaught of ridiculously frivolous lawsuits claiming massive voter fraud. Meanwhile, Trump is doing what anyone paying attention knew he would do — refusing to concede, wreaking havoc to all the institutions of government, and firing any government official who didn't bow down in fealty to Trump's ego. But all that is so silly as to be almost boring. Trump lost, his presidency will end, and he'll leave the White House in January. It's a done deal. So, rather than railing about the current Republican madness, I want to write instead about the looney-tunes crap going on among the Democrats.

Before I launch into my diatribe, and in the spirit of full disclosure, let me state again, for the umpteenth time, that I have no regard for either party in the duopoly. The Republican and Democratic hierarchies are two sides of the same coin. And I do mean "coin" in the most literal sense. As organized political institutions, both parties are completely beholden to their Corporate and Big Money donors, and they like it that way. That's who they serve.

The Republicans are more out front about this than the Democrats, but both parties devote considerable time and energy trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the American public. (Given the myopia of Americans, that effort is largely successful.) Each claims in its own bizarre manner to be "for The People," but that's just not true.

Whenever the choice comes down to doing what the American people want, need, or might benefit from, or doing what their financial backers want (as it almost invariably does), both parties choose their donors every time. Each party makes that choice without any inner angst, because they've built an impregnable fortress of rationalizations and justifications for why it's necessary. Both sides tend to sleep soundly in their McMansions without so much as a shred of remorse.

OK, enough of my caveat.

In the aftermath of an election where the Democrats should have wiped the floor with the Republicans but didn't — losing seats in the House, not gaining control

of the Senate or flipping any state legislatures — the Blame Game of finger-pointing among the mainstream media pundits and within the Democratic Party has already begun (yet again).

This game has many facets, of course, but the one I want to focus on here involves blaming Progressives (and the Left, meaning those who want socialism for the people rather than socialism for the rich) for the failures of the Democrats, both in their failure to win elections and their failure when in office to achieve policy changes that help regular Americans. The Blame Argument goes like this: *Democrats would win if only the Progressive Left would stop hounding us and surrender to Centrism.*

The argument basically implies that Democrats should officially run and govern as Republicans. They should (and do) support austerity imposed on the public and ever-increasing funding of the military-industrial complex, which now includes the police. They should (and do) oppose Medicare for All, free college, a mandatory living wage, dismantling of corporate hegemony, and reduction of the surveillance state. All of those are Republican positions.

In other words, so the argument goes, Democrats should endorse neoliberal “trickle down,” the allocation and distribution of the American wealth pie so that the richest 10% get the overwhelming share (which will be paid for by the rest of us, the 90%).

That is not, however, an evidence-based presumption. It’s a fictional narrative used over and over to allow the Democrats to remain what they have become — a corrupt party bought and owned by Corporate and Big Money donors. This includes Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, and Chuck Schumer, plus lesser lights like James Clyburn. All these politicians, and indeed, most Democrats within the party hierarchy, have sold their souls for big bucks. They like to call themselves Centrists and Moderates, but they govern like Republicans. Not only are they personally wealthy, they govern for the rich.

The argument holds that Democratic candidates would win elections if only they’d stop pushing Medicare for All. But that’s a lie — pure, unadulterated bullshit. The truth is the exact opposite.

Whether in districts that went for Biden or Trump, Democratic Congressional Candidates who *supported* universal health care (Medicare for All) WON their contests. On the other hand, Democratic Candidates who *didn’t* support universal health care LOST, regardless of how their districts voted for President.

As evidence, Katie Porter and Mike Levin in California, Matt Cartwright in Pennsylvania, and Jared Golden in Maine actively supported Medicare for All, and each ran in districts that went for Trump. ALL of them won their elections.

By contrast, consider Debbie Powell and Donna Shalala in Florida, plus Abby Finkenauer in Iowa, none of whom supported universal health care. Despite running in Democratic districts won by Joe Biden, they all LOST.

But then, the facts don't matter to the Corporate-owned Democrats. They still loudly proclaim the Centrist Argument as if it were true. And why not? That's what they believe in. Who cares if their argument is false?

Look, I understand that we live in a country that is downright hysterical about certain labels. "Socialism" is still a dirty word for many Americans, despite the fact that America has historically embraced socialism for corporations, the wealthy, and the ownership class. And yes, "defund the police" is probably an ill-chosen shorthand for sane opposition to the increasing militarization of law enforcement. Black Lives Matter is still a bridge too far for half the country, as are budget reductions for the Pentagon and police, or dismantling our nuclear arsenal. But Medicare for All??? Give me a break. Americans *overwhelmingly* want universal health care. Sadly, Democrats are addicted to the blood money dangled like carrots in front of the donkey by the army of lobbyists employed by for-profit Health Insurance companies and Big Pharma.

The only way for Republicans to keep winning elections is to lie and cheat (which they do with gusto), but their continuing success is aided and abetted by a Democratic Party that has no intention of actually standing for the welfare of the general public (i.e., working Americans of whatever color).

Odds that a Biden administration will turn around this sorry state are very slim. Life in America over the coming years is going to get a lot worse for most of us. That is tragic, but at this point appears inevitable. The privileged elites of both parties like their power and will do anything to maintain their control and continue the status quo. The techniques of narrative mind-control that keep the public stupefied (on both sides) are sophisticated and effective, honed to a razor's edge by a century of marketing.

Education won't break the spell. Only pain can do that. It's already here. So far, the 90% is still pitted against itself in tribal factions. Whether that will change as our overall collective suffering increases is uncertain. As always, time will tell.