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*European Languages*

زبانهای اروپائی

AUGUST 10, 2018

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12.08.2018

## *Pity the Democrats and Republicans*

It is a rare occasion when one can only pity both the Republican and Democratic Parties. The GOP (Generally Opposed to Progress) has hitched its rather dilapidated wagon to a racist, sexist, narcissistic man-child of a star who has only the most tenuous grasp on reality. But it is not them we are here to discuss today. It is the Democrats, the Party that, had it been a person, would never have been voted most likely to succeed upon graduation from high school.

Currently, one would think that the Democrats would be poised for great success. Mid-term elections are approaching; the president, Donald Trump, has record-breaking low approval scores, and there is dissatisfaction with him from coast to coast. Now, one might think, is the time for the Democrats to clearly articulate their platform, allowing the populace to know exactly where the party stands, and what it will do to achieve its goals. This might include such popular items as sensible gun-control; recognition of Palestine's human-rights struggles and Israel's violations of international law; income equality, gender equality, and an end to institutionalized racism, among other things. These, according to public opinion polls, are topics that resonate with voters who mainly identify as Democratic.

But no! Horror of horrors! Best, according to the Party leaders, to lay low, and allow dissatisfaction with the Republicans to drive voters into the arms of the Democratic Party. Maintain the status quo, don't rock the boat, steady as she goes, and adhere to every other tired out cliché that means don't show any backbone. So what if voters enthusiastically evicted a ten-term, good-old-boy Congress member from New York, in favor of a socialist

Democrat! Who cares that a large swath of the Party still feels the deep wounds of betrayal from the Party's manipulation of delegates to give the 2016 presidential nomination to the candidate who is corporate America incarnate, Hillary Clinton, instead of the (somewhat) more progressive Bernie Sanders! The power brokers, such as they are, in the Democratic Party are not willing to surrender their positions, and are terrified to risk what they have by showing anything related to statesmanship. Those currently in power have been elected and re-elected despite their namby-pamby positions, or non-positions, on the current issues of the day. Why do anything differently now?

Well, we can answer that question, although the people who really need to hear the answer won't bother to pay any attention. We'll look at a few factors that one would think would cause the Party that claims to be progressive (you can stop laughing now) to take careful note.

+ Following a long series of mass shootings, high school students in Florida finally said 'enough'. Several of the survivors of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre travelled around the country, saying that if the current Congress won't act, a new Congress must be installed. Millions of people in this age cohort will be eligible to vote for the first time in 2018. Study after study shows that they are overwhelmingly to the left of where the Democratic Party is today. They probably won't stay home, but they may seek third-party candidates, so they can vote for someone they actually believe in, rather than the slightly lesser of two evils. But if Democrats renew calls for sensible gun control, including the banning of semi-automatic weapons, they may find these new voters flocking to the polls to vote for them.

+ Israeli government officials are having apoplexy over what they correctly see as an increasing disconnect between Jewish-Americans and the racist, apartheid Jewish state of Israel. In the aforementioned 14th Congressional district of New York, twenty-year incumbent Joe Crowley, financed in part by AIPAC (Apartheid Israel Political Affairs Committee) went down to a crushing defeat at the hands of newcomer Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has been highly critical of Israel. Might not some other candidates want to take a page from her playbook, and speak out for human rights and international law? Or are even those topics too controversial for Democrats to address?

+ Polls indicate that most voters aren't thrilled with the newly-enacted tax reform (Surprise! Surprise!), which was an early Christmas present to the rich. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan showed how out-of-touch he was after the tax bill became law, when he 'tweeted' this: "A secretary at a public high school in Lancaster, PA, said she was

pleasantly surprised her pay went up \$1.50 a week... she said [that] will more than cover her Costco membership for a year.” So while this secretary received a whopping \$78.00 annual raise, the richest 1% of the nation’s population receive about 34% of the total benefits from the multi-billion dollar tax reform. A platform by the Democrats to really reform taxes would probably resonate, even with people who are \$78.00 richer as a result of the GOP version.

+ Trump and Company are beating the war drums for ‘regime change’ of the democratically-elected government of Iran. Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) against the wishes and advice of nearly the entire international community, and his own military advisors. Wouldn’t a plank in the Democratic platform that says that Democrats will work to reinstate U.S. involvement in the JCPOA, and attempt to prevent chaos in yet another Middle Eastern country, possibly have wide appeal? Yes, U.S. citizens, inexplicably, seem to love their wars, but a new breed of voter is on the horizon, and will be pulling levers in voting booths in just three short months. They may be a bit less enthused about sending U.S. soldiers to die for Israel, whose influence was a main factor in Trump’s decision to abandon the JCPOA.

+ The Republicans have made good on their promise to deprive millions of people of health care. Democrats who will unflinchingly condemn those actions, and vow to reinstate the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare), or something better, may find unexpected popularity.

+ Young people often graduate from universities and colleges in the U.S. with crippling debt. Even if the free tuition advocated by Ocasio-Cortez and others isn’t possible at present (it is, but this writer doesn’t see the Democratic Party ever going that far), couldn’t interest rates be lowered? Why is it necessary for lenders to make huge profits from the efforts of the next generation to become educated? And couldn’t there be some kind of debt forgiveness program? Even 25% would be a windfall to many people.

These are just a few of the many areas in which the Democrats could differentiate themselves from the Republicans. Will they do it? Will the Party unite, look at not only what the people want, but also what is morally right, and stand up for those principles? When pigs fly. Government officials today (this writer refuses to refer to them as ‘representatives’, since they represent only special interests and anything that will benefit them personally, and not the voting populace) are only concerned with keeping their high-paying jobs with almost unlimited benefits. The idea of public service, working for the greater good, or sacrificing for those who are less fortunate are alien concepts to them.

It is possible that the Democratic Party will take control of one or both houses of Congress as a result of the November elections. If that happens, not much will change. The NRA (National Rifle Association), AIPAC, various military lobbies and others will still be the ones actually in control. The U.S. voters will have participated once again in what government officials proudly and disingenuously point to as a hallmark of U.S. democracy, but what is in reality an exercise in futility. With each election, the names may change, but all the injustice, domestically and internationally, continues.