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It's Time for Hillary Clinton to Step Aside

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The tale usually told by, and always allegedly for, the Party faithful in American politics is that the major political and policy differences are between the dominant Parties. Left unsaid in forums where it might matter is that these differences have tended to migrate in tandem over the decades and that they are more of style and degree than of type. Republicans unite willful ignorance with belligerence to promote the destructive and self-interested programs of empire while Democrats explain why willful ignorance and belligerence produce bad outcomes as they

leave it to behind-the-scenes actors and uni-directional ‘market forces’ to accomplish the same ends.

When the wildly murderous and ill-conceived U.S. war against Iraq began to head south in the early-mid 2000s national Democrats, led by Hillary Clinton, argued that the problem was that the war was being ‘poorly managed.’ What ‘good management’ would have looked like — more innocents murdered? turned into refugees? bombs dropped? and / or regions destabilized? was never articulated. The ‘bad management’ thesis was to support the war— one of the greatest humanitarian and strategic catastrophes in world history, while feigning opposition. And Hillary Clinton’s non-apology for it was the same as for her role in creating the carceral state— that ‘everyone’ believed the lies created to support it.

Who this ‘everyone’ is is important to understand. ‘It’ is the imperial (mis)leadership class that supports U.S. wars of aggression, unchecked corporate power, the carceral state, an increasingly intrusive surveillance state, voter disenfranchisement, a permanent ‘war on terror’ and the privatization of education and health care. Republicans deny climate crisis while Democrats give it credence but pass ‘trade’ agreements that shift the capacity to do anything about it to the corporations creating the crisis. The corporate-state frame assures that identity politics serve Wall Street, war profiteers, oil, gas and petrochemical company executives and the beneficiaries of inherited wealth to the detriment of the rest of us.

Hillary Clinton’s main selling point, that she has the experience to competently navigate the terrain of this leadership class, takes its existence as given and requires overlooking the disastrous consequences of its reign. Were there a paucity of plutocrats and their servants in government few would argue that their absence detracted from the political vitality of the West. Mrs. Clinton’s Republican counterparts display the traits of willful ignorance and belligerence, but few can claim her history of loyal service to empire, to Wall Street, to the executive class, to the carceral state and to the Democratic establishment. There exists nary a war of aggression, a corporate privilege, a privatization of public services or an act against the common good that Mrs. Clinton has factually opposed in her years of public self-service.

Former (Bill) Clinton Labor Secretary Robert Reich spent the last several decades performing the odious task of selling establishment Democratic Party policies to an increasingly disillusioned Party faithful. During a moment of lucidity in the BBC documentary *The Century of the Self* Mr. Reich addressed one of the conundrums of Clintonism, the reigning philosophy of the Democratic establishment, in a back-and-forth with Clinton advisor Dick Morris paraphrased here (see link for exact language): Dick Morris: what’s the point of running for election if you aren’t going to win? Robert Reich: what’s the point of winning elections if you don’t have a political program to enact?

The exchange was in response to the Clinton program of using polls to craft micro-policies that would appeal to white, suburban ‘swing’ voters under the theory that they were the only voters ‘in play.’ This theory had it that Republicans had a lock on the white, conservative and ‘business vote’ and Democrats had a lock on ‘minority’ voters and labor. The irony here is that the Clintons had a political program— it was to keep the Democratic establishment in power at all costs. The point was eventually made that poll results are paradoxical— if people are asked if

they want increased services and lower taxes, mutually exclusive policies within the Clinton's 'taxes fund Federal spending' misdirection, they answer yes to both.

In a move that illustrated the historical naiveté, bordering on outright stupidity, of the Clinton polling program, George W. Bush's administration fed its talking points to the captive national press so they would later appear as self-generated concurrence with its policies. It wasn't that George W. Bush had discovered some brilliant theory of propaganda— similar programs to drum up support for wars, racial repression and 'freedom' for Western corporations to do as they wished had been used since the turn of the twentieth century (link above). Rather the Clinton theory of 'micro' democracy through polling is neoliberal blather, a 'consumer choice' theory of politics that presents local product choices as the realm of the political within the broader confines of a totalizing system (capitalism).

The great conundrum for Democratic Party loyalists at this point in history is how change happens, as if modern governance were a technocratic exercise rather than a division of the spoils. 'Consumer choice' politics focuses on 'product' innovation, on incremental changes, because rejection of the neoliberal / neoconservative realm threatens the relations of dominance. The faux-centrist 'compromise' behind Democratic establishment programs is that of brokers selling products of dubious and declining value to captive 'marks.' In this world health care is more health insurance, education is more student loans, provision of shelter is more home loans, transportation policy is more car loans, mortgage relief is more bank subsidies and national defense is 'humanitarian' grabs for global resources.

This view of governance, made fact by bi-partisan establishment politicians, is of matching buyers (the electorate) with sellers (corporate benefactors of the uni-Party system) under the premise that 'markets' will force privateers to deliver the promised goods. While the term 'neoliberalism' might well be appropriate here, the facts seem to point to something deeper, like Lenin's critique of the state as the creation of capitalism to serve the interests of connected capitalists. The liberal view is of a unity of interests even as liberals, using the Clinton 'model,' have been busy dismantling even the pretense of the political symmetry needed to force such a unity.

What Hillary Clinton is offering is better customer relations, to help 'the people' feel good again about multi-national oil and gas companies, Wall Street, the imperial military, their local police departments and corporate-state governance. When Dow Chemical was under fire for its 'contribution' of napalm and Agent Orange to the unpopular U.S. war in Southeast Asia it began putting pictures of flowers, a symbol of the anti-war movement, into its advertisements. With Wall Street, multi-national oil and gas company lobbyists and pharmaceutical companies funding Hillary Clinton's campaign, she positions herself as dispassionate agent of mutual interests when her paycheck depends on satisfying the needs of her corporate benefactors alone.

Mrs. Clinton's support for mass incarceration has found apologists who (correctly) point out that there were plenty of Black (mis)leaders who were likewise arguing for a police / carceral response to the crack 'epidemic.' As author Dan Baum writes in Harper's, the 'war on drugs' was from its inception a political weapon conceived by the Nixon administration to imprison, surveil, disrupt and otherwise impede Black communities and the anti-war Left. The 'Iran-

Contra' hearings of the late 1980s provided testimony (once again) that importing hard drugs for distribution in American cities was unofficial government policy. Available explanations are that the Clintons were 'useful idiots' in the Right's efforts to crush communities of color, its willing agents or cynical opportunists who sought political benefit by demonizing citizens caught up in an engineered public health crisis.

For those who may have forgotten, it was Bill Clinton who at the time was repeating Ronald Reagan's phrase that 'government is the problem, not the solution.' The phrase has resonance in the context of the Clinton's own 'war on drugs' because it was popular disaffection over the U.S. war in Southeast Asia and the constant harassment, arrest and imprisonment for possession of illegal drugs that supported Mr. Reagan's anti-government rhetoric that in turn supported his (and the Clinton's) neo-capitalist resurgence. The Clinton's were hardly seeking to limit government intrusion into people's lives by building out the most intrusive carceral state in world history. They were using government as a tool of repression against the same targets chosen by Messrs. Nixon, Reagan and (George H.W.) Bush before them.

The argument that Hillary Clinton isn't responsible for her husband's policies conflates guilt-by-association with policies that she factually developed and promoted when Bill Clinton was President. Mrs. Clinton was an active proponent of mass incarceration in her own right. The modern incarnation of 'humanitarian intervention' that Mrs. Clinton used as Barack Obama's Secretary of State to sell the U.S. (NATO) war against Libya was developed by the Clinton's as cover for their in-humanitarian interventions in Kosovo, Somalia, Haiti and Iraq. In her own right Mrs. Clinton engineered the destruction of Libya, the U.S. sponsored right-wing coup in Ukraine, the funding of 'opposition' forces in Syria and a right-wing coup in Honduras.

At this point in history the aggressively imperialist politics of the neoconservatives and the capitalist-resurgence economic policies of neoliberals constitute the bounds of political possibility in Western centers of power. Except when running for public office, Mrs. Clinton has been an unapologetic proponent of the worst that neo-conservatism and neoliberalism have to offer. She callously and unapologetically destroyed the lives of millions through mass incarceration and through wars she started and supported. And it has been instructive to see her and her liberal apologists 'hippie-punch' younger voters, Black activists and aging Leftists pushing for racial reconciliation, (real) universal health care, universal public education including college and graduate school, an end to imperial wars and real resolution of impending environmental catastrophe.

There is no— zero, nada, zilch, possibility that Mrs. Clinton will actually step aside to make room for the Leftward leaning youth movement now propelling Bernie Sanders. The stakes in terms of political graft, patronage and the power to serve the deeply entrenched Western plutocracy are too high for establishment Democrats (and Republicans) to forego in the public interest. Not only will Mrs. Clinton and her cohort use the levers they have created to assure that she is the Democratic Party candidate, the Democratic establishment will be the greatest hindrance to political and social resolution should Mr. Sanders prevail. The Party of FDR will do whatever is in its power to destroy the New Deal revival programs that Mr. Sanders is promoting.

Were Bernie Sanders to prevail, the challenge would be for an international, anti-imperialist, coalition to make moving his political program Leftward the 'pragmatic' choice for the Western political establishment and the reigning plutocracy. Those arguing that Mr. Sanders will have the power to force contingencies on the Democratic establishment even if he loses are deluded. The choices are between hard-fought struggle before, during and after Mr. Sander's wins election, moving forward with an international program outside of establishment politics if he loses and incapacitation and resignation. Should Hillary Clinton prevail expect nicer language around the same neo-imperial and neo-capitalist policies that Ted Cruz or Marco Rubio would implement.