

Bernie Sanders and the Rigging of the American Electoral System

News:

On Thursday 9 June 2016, US Democratic Party candidate Senator Bernie Sanders met with President Obama at the White House. After the meeting Obama released a pre-prepared video announcing his endorsement for Hillary Clinton as Democratic Party Presidential nominee. Bernie Sanders has vowed to continue to contest the nomination until the Democratic Party convention, participating in the last remaining primary election in Washington DC on Tuesday.

Comment:

Democracy came late to Western countries. When the leaders of the American Revolution came to design their system, they were strongly influenced by Montesquieu's early eighteenth century description of British government as an ideal mixture of the elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy in a single system of ruling. So, in place of the King, they had the US President, elected by the states and not by the people directly. The aristocracy was envisaged to be the moneyed elite landowners, from whom were selected the US Senate. And the democratic element was provided by the House of Representatives. Of course in practice the democratic element was the weakest in both Britain and America; many of its members were not much more than proxies for members of the aristocratic elite who would back their preferred candidates in each constituency.

Modern democratic government is actually an atheistic idea. Man decides his fate and not God. After the failure of the French Revolution, which ended in the emperorship of Napoleon, the call for democracy was taken up by European socialism. Western governments came under pressure from strong popular socialist movements to make their ruling systems fully democratic. In Britain, the seat of government moved from the monarchy to the House of Lords and then to the House of Commons. And in America, elections were instituted for Senators and, indirectly through the delegate system, for the President. This of course was how it was presented. But in reality, through the vehicles of political parties, the elite are still able to determine candidates for election and so rig the system in their favour.

Bernie Sanders represents the single greatest attempt in recent times to break through the stranglehold of the two major political parties in America. The longest-ever serving independent member in the Senate, Sanders joined the Democratic Party only in 2015 but has mounted a hugely popular campaign for election as the Democratic Party nominee for US President. Addressing the concerns of ordinary Americans particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 financial and economic collapse, Bernie Sanders, a self-proclaimed 'democratic socialist', has made the American elite the target of his campaigning.

The extent of the threat of Bernie Sanders can be seen from the unprecedented media coverage given to Donald Trump. The American elite, shocked by the rise of Sanders, has been forced to tacitly support Donald Trump, seeing him as the only realistic counter to Bernie Sanders on the Republican side after the very weak performance of Jeb Bush. Trump has had the most media coverage of any candidate despite spending the smallest of budgets, receiving a much greater amount of free airtime than anyone else.

On the Democratic side, in addition to receiving far more media coverage than Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton also has the supposedly-neutral Democratic Party leadership on her side, as can be seen in the arrangement of candidate debates and the interpretation of state election rules to benefit her campaign. Furthermore, almost all of the non-elected 'super delegates' committed very early to Clinton, swerving the result in her favour almost from the start, even though super delegates are not supposed to vote until the Democratic convention held at the end of the primary races. Without the super delegates, Clinton is still short of the number of delegates needed to secure the Democratic Party nomination.

Now finally, President Obama himself has intervened to ensure that the threat of Bernie Sanders is neutralised and that Clinton secures the nomination. On Thursday, he put his support behind Clinton, after meeting with Sanders to attempt to pacify him. It has surely become clear now to Sanders that even a man of his many decades of considerable political experience cannot break the hold of the American elite on the US ruling system. He will now content himself with whatever small compromises are offered to him.

It is now fully expected that Hillary Clinton will become the 45th president of the United States of America. Trump will quickly discover that his amazing talents do not seem to work as well in the general election as they did in the Republican primary elections.

The world will not be free of the control of elite interest until the false ideal of democracy is completely eliminated from our political vocabulary.

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