Democratic deficit

BY M A H I R A L I | 2/12/2020

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| BACK in the year 2000, the winner of the JFK Presidential Library`s annual Profiles in Courage Essay Contest was a high school senior from Indiana. `Cynical candidates have developed an ability to outgrow their convictions in order to win power,` he lamented. But he saw a glimmer of hope.  `Fortunately for the political process,` he noted, `there remain a number of committed individuals who are steadf ast enough in their beliefs to run for of fice to benefit their fellow Americans ...  `One outstanding and inspiring example of such integrity is the country`s only independent congressman, Vermont`s Bernie Sanders.` He commended Sanders` courage in describing himself as a socialist `in a country where `communism`is still the dirtiest of ideological dirty words`.  He concluded by adding, `Above all, I commend Bernie Sanders for giving me an answer to those who say American young people see politics as a cesspool of corruption, beyond redemption.  The evaluation of Sanders still rings true 20 years later, unlike the author of those words, who has dived headlong into that cesspool. His name? Pete Buttigieg.  Maybe he changed his mind at Harvard, or as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, or as an employee of the wretched McKinsey firm.  His record as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, has been called into question.  Buttigieg claimed a win in last week`s Iowa caucus well before the votes had been tallied, perhaps confident in the knowledge that the software firm to which his campaign had subscribed would ensure his triumph. It almost turned out that way.  The consequence is that Buttigieg is levelpegging with Sanders in terms of delegates, despite the latter obtaining substantially more support. If the idea was to deny Sanders the momentum he would have obtained from a clear win in Iowa, it appears to have worked. The fact is, the hierarchy of the responsible software firm and its parent company are littered with imperatives either from or related to the Obama administration, the Clinton campaign of 2016 and the Buttigieg campaign of 2020.  Could this be a coincidence? It wasn`t just the Shadow app: recent revelations call into question the entire history of the quaint process whereby Iowa picks its delegates, suggesting there may well have been substantial discrepancies over the decades, not least in 2016, when Sanders lost to Hillary Clinton by a fraction of a percentage point.  He went on to win handsomely in New Hampshire, where it`s harder to manipulate the outcome. The results from this year`s New Hampshire primary should come through today, and may offer an indicationof what lies ahead.  There can be little question, though, that the Democratic establishment is petrified of Sanders. You`ll often hear the argument that the senator from Vermont would be a disastrous choice, because Donald Trump will rip him to pieces. But can any `pundit` seriously claim that the incumbent president would be any less vicious if confronted with Buttigieg, Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren or Amy Klobuchar? If anything, Sanders potentially poses a bigger dilemma, because his appeal reaches the same working-class constituencies that Trump deluded four years ago and may well do so again if his rival is someone who panders to the billionaires.  Or even if it is a billionaire in person, like Michael Bloomberg, the former Republican mayor of New York.  There`s a theory that the Democratic establishment is keen for Buttigieg to hover around the top of the field until Bloomberg -who doesn`t need campaign contributionsbecause he`s worth $60 billion, and who hasn`t bothered to test his viability in the early primary states steps in as the `consensus` candidate.  The democratic establishment has brought out some of its big guns to firewarning shots, including Hillary Clinton, who has claimed that no one likes Bernie.  Flash back to 2008, with Clinton tearfully wondering in public why no one liked her, eliciting a condescending response from Barack Obama. Obama hasn`t extended that courtesy to Sanders, privately pledging to undermine him should he come close to being nominated. Likewise John Kerry. To say nothing of the mainstream `anti-Trump` news media.  The odds are stacked against Sanders, and it`s doubtful whether he can override them. The bulk of his support is among the youth, but they don`t always come out to vote. It`s useful to remember, though, that if the British franchise had been restricted to under-45s, Jeremy Corbyn`s Labour would have won December`s election by a landslide. But then again, notwithstanding the odds, young voters propelled Sinn Fein to a leading position in last Saturday`s Irish election.  America is a very dif ferent entity. But one would like to think, at this juncture, that all hope is not lost. Not yet, at least. m mahir.dawn@gmail.com |