

Moderation May Be Dead in the Democratic Party ... But in America?

I'm out of the prediction business, at least when it comes to politics. The 2016 presidential election convinced me that I'm not as smart as I thought I was. So I have humbly come to my senses. No more predictions. But ...

I'm pretty sure that if the 2020 election is about Donald Trump and his abrasive personality – and not about the economy he presides over – there's a good chance he'll lose. Defeated not by his Democratic opponent, but by his own mouth.

At least that's what I thought until I watched those Democratic presidential candidates make Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton look like right-wingers. If there had been any lingering doubts about whether the progressives were really taking over the old liberal Democratic Party, those doubts, post-debates, were fading fast.

Let's start with immigration, what Democrats, until 10 minutes ago, called a "fake crisis." Now, even if they don't use the term, most if not all the Democrats running for president are for what amounts to open borders.

They want amnesty for illegals already in this country. They don't want a wall. They're not pushing congress to tighten asylum laws. And they fell all over each other making their case ... in Spanish.

And someday, if the progressives have their way, all those immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador will have a path to citizenship and the right to vote that comes with it – whether they came here illegally or not. And guess what party they'll be voting for.

But wait, there's more. If you thought free health care (no premiums, no co-pays) for all Americans was expensive, how about free health care *for anyone clever enough to sneak into the country.*

If I had to pick just one low light of the debates it came on night two, when the candidates were asked if they favored free health care *for undocumented immigrants*— and everyone's hand went up, even a reluctant Joe Biden, the supposed moderate in the field.

Progressives loved it. The in-house crowd cheered. Now let's see how the rest of America feels about paying the medical bills for millions of people who snuck into the country.

The Democrats might as well put a great big neon sign on the border, facing south, with colorful lights flashing: *Come on over, you'll get free medical care today – and citizenship tomorrow!*

Even college-educated suburban women – the group that turned against the Republicans in the 2018 midterms – can't be happy with that.

And when they weren't offering goodies to illegal immigrants, they were painting a dark picture of America, a place, if you believed them, where only the rich are doing well and everyone else is struggling to get by. A place where folks have to hold down three jobs, as one candidate told us, to make ends meet.

But we're not living in Charles Dickens America where everyone but Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates has to beg for more gruel. And American voters know this. A CNN poll says 71 percent of Americans think the economy is "very good" or "somewhat good" – despite what the progressives running for president are telling them.

On abortion: Every Democrat running for president is not only

pro-choice – but the best I can figure, abortion with no restrictions ... “no reservations or qualms, no sense of just or civilized limits,” as Peggy Noonan put it in her Wall Street Journal column.

But even abortion on demand wasn't enough for one progressive candidate – Julian Castro – who said *transgender females* should not be denied the right to federally funded abortions. Too bad Saturday Night Live isn't as funny as Julian Castro.

The two most high profile progressive candidates – Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders (who came off as even more angry and crotchety than usual) – want to do away with all private medical insurance. Another great idea as far as the hard left is concerned. But a Hill-HarrisX poll finds that only 13 percent of Americans say they want a health insurance system with no private plans.

Then there's free tuition at public colleges and forgiveness of student loans – to be paid for by raising taxes on the rich – the gang that progressives say will pay for just about everything. Except, as Bernie Sanders reluctantly admitted, taxes would go up on the *middle class* too, to pay for his Medicare for All plan.

And what about the rest of the progressive Democrats' free for all agenda?

There aren't enough billionaires to pay for free college, amnesty for student loans, a Green New Deal, expansion of Social Security, a federal job guarantee, higher teacher pay, and a lot more.

Pandering to the progressive base may pay off in the short run, but what happens when it becomes clear that the Democrats, under the radar, are running a *Soak the Middle Class* campaign?

Here are a few other numbers that Democrats might want to consider. Gallup tells us that 35 percent of Americans identify themselves as conservatives; another 35 percent as moderates; and only 26 percent call themselves liberal.

Yet almost every Democrat running for president is pitching his and her ideas to the 26 percent – and detaching themselves from everybody else. Does this make sense?

Maybe, but only in the short run. Politicians of both parties are always playing to the base in the primaries before moving to the center in the general election. But this time around Democrats are going to have a tough time walking back all the trash talk about how the economy is only benefiting the wealthy, about how everybody else is living in a bleak dog-eat-dog country ... and explaining what they meant when they raised their hands to say, We're for free health care for everyone – including illegal aliens.

If the Republicans don't make a TV ad out of that scene, they'll deserve to lose.

So, with unemployment low and wages on the rise, Donald Trump should be waltzing to an easy win next November. But his act is getting old. And a lot of Americans – even some who voted for him last time around – are exhausted; tired of the pettiness, the name-calling, the non-stop controversies.

He's making his reelection tougher than it ought to be.

But guess who's riding to his rescue? Yes, the very same Democrats who want to replace him. Two nights of debates have shown us that while moderation may be dead in the new progressive Democratic Party, there's a real danger that it's not yet dead in the rest of America – or even in large chunks of the old Democratic base

And those moderate Democrats who wouldn't vote for Donald Trump in a million years don't have to vote for him in 2020 to

insure his victory. They just have to be so turned off by their own candidate, that they sit home on Election Day.

Joe Biden was supposed to be the great moderate hope, the guy with the best chance of defeating Donald Trump. It's still early, but after his debate performance last Thursday night, that's not so certain. Joe Biden not only isn't "woke" enough for the new progressive base, there's a good chance he never heard of the word.

This isn't your father's Democratic Party. Hard to believe but it isn't even Barack Obama's Democratic Party. The party has moved so far to the left that it makes George McGovern's disastrous 1972 campaign look downright moderate by comparison.

Progressives have the passion and the energy. It sure looks like they're in charge now.

And Donald Trump is smiling.