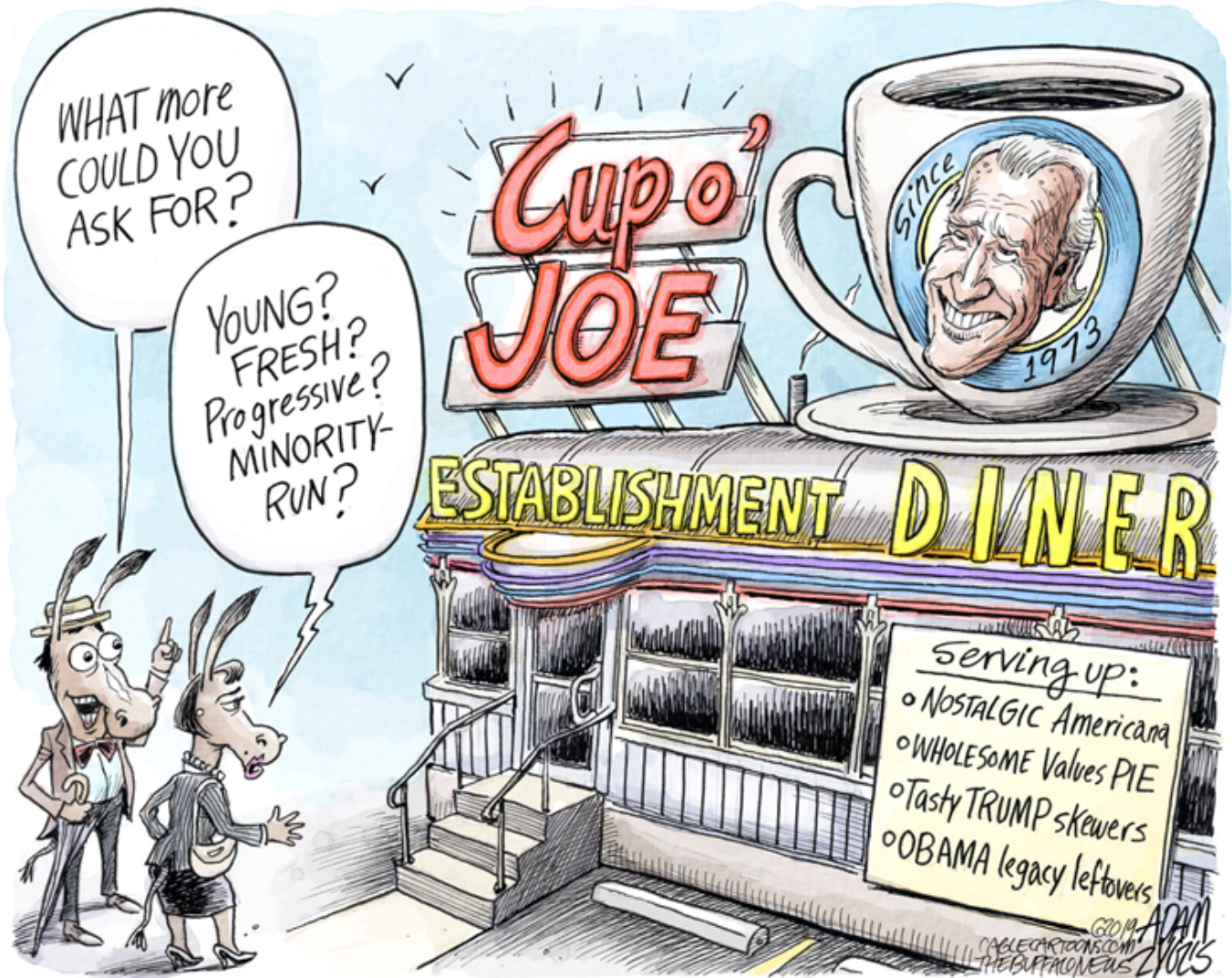


BIDEN OCCUPYING THE LEAST CROWDED PRIMARY LANE

by Carl Golden, May 9, 2019



“Finding a lane” has become this election cycle’s shorthand advice to candidates attempting to separate themselves from the competition and focus on a pre-determined course that will lead to the ultimate prize.

For the 21 candidates seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, finding a lane has meant throwing sharp elbows, cutting one another off in the best tradition of congested freeway driving and knocking them permanently off stride.

Former Vice President Joe Biden is currently occupying the least crowded lane of all – right in the middle where history instructs us the majority of the American people are.

The other 20 have chosen the left lane and, in a version of the carnival amusement ride bumper cars, are clanging off one another on an increasingly narrow path, marked by each out-pledging their competitors in support of a breathtaking array of government-provided services and multi-trillion dollar spending.

Biden, who risked becoming a caricature of Hamlet as he agonized over whether to enter the race, leads the field by a margin ranging from single digits to nearly 30 points, depending on which poll findings one accepts.

While instant name recognition built up over some 40 years in public life and his perch at the right hand of President Obama for eight years undoubtedly played a role in his poll standings, his philosophy of moderation, embrace of the bipartisan politics of the possible and his man-of-the-people demeanor have placed him apart from the headlong stampede to the left and the promises of a fantasy, utopian America overseen by a benevolent Federal government which will – in the words of one cynic – “fix everybody’s leaky faucet.”

Biden is on cruise control in a deserted middle lane, gliding past those bunched in a pack on his left who are jockeying for a favorable position while arguing over who is more progressive; i.e., who can promise more social services no matter how expensive or unrealistic.

Of the left lane runners, five have risen above their competition as possible threats to Biden – Senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Kamala Harris of California and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts; former Texas Congressman Beto O’Rourke, and South Bend, Ind. Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Senators Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, and Cory Booker of New Jersey are stuck at two to four percent support, struggling to remain in the conversation.

The remainder of the field is irrelevant and it won’t be long before Las Vegas bookies start taking action on whether Gillibrand, Klobuchar, Booker or O’Rourke will survive past the Iowa caucuses in February.

Biden’s front runner status and his impressive fund raising is clear evidence that the surge to the left led by the more militant members of Congress and their demands that the old line party establishment – exemplified by Biden – is neither as powerful or as widespread as its leaders would have people believe.

As candidates align themselves more tightly with the left, they risk placing the interests of a narrow sliver of the electorate above those of the broader American public – the segment of the population that played an outsized role in sending Donald Trump to the White House in 2016.

They are bogged down in crass attempts to one up one another, arguing over who is more ideologically pure on issues like Medicare for all, immigration reform, free college tuition, forgiving all student loan debt, reparations for descendants of slaves, allowing prisoners (including convicted murderers and terrorists) to vote, increasing taxes and breaking up corporate behemoths.

They’ve ignored polling data which reveals voters – including a majority who identify themselves as Democrats – place a higher priority on nominating a candidate capable of defeating Trump than on ideology.

Translation: Voters prefer a candidate in the middle lane.

Enter Joe Biden.

To be sure, Biden’s history will be a factor as the campaigns play out but he’s demonstrated he can deal with it. He deftly responded to allegations of unwanted personal interactions with females, apologizing for creating an uncomfortable situation, pledging to be more considerate in the future and attributing his conduct to a natural inclination toward comfort and compassion.

America is still a centrist nation in its politics and, if it chooses Biden next year, the ideological excesses of the Democratic Party, may be purged at last.

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