

<http://ctviewpoints.org/2016/02/29/sanders-a-democrat/>



CT Viewpoints

POLITICS

Letting Sanders run as a Democrat was a big mistake by the DNC



Courtesy Sanders campaign



Edward Marcus

By Attorney Edward Marcus,

Bernie Sanders. A Democrat. Really?

Sanders has run and been elected as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont; run for and been elected a Vermont Congressman; and run and been elected as a U.S. senator from

Vermont. In none of those elections has he ever identified himself as a Democrat. He has run as either a socialist, or independent, but never as a Democrat.

So how is he able to run as a Democrat in 2016? I guess we would have to ask [Debbie Wasserman Schultz](#) the chairperson of the Democratic National Committee. She is directly responsible for permitting Sanders, an avowed socialist, to run as a Democrat. Did she think it would just be a good workout for Hillary, or did she not have the guts to say no?

I believe that it is the latter. What the Democratic National Committee has done to the Democratic Party by declaring Sanders eligible to run as a Democrat is to force Hillary to spend time, money, and energy that could have been devoted to the general election against a Republican.

Sanders is so far to the left that he could never be elected as President, despite his recent showing in the New Hampshire primary. His values, and that of most of us who have been lifetime Democrats, are not the same.

It is easy to attract support from college kids who know nothing about the real world. In Connecticut he'll get help from people who see support for Sanders as a way of becoming a delegate to the National Convention, as well as from those who believe in distributing other people's money to those who may not be as fortunate. We already do this by way of progressive taxation, but for some folks that isn't good enough.

Sanders is an annoyance much in the way of a Jerry Brown in 1992, Ted Kennedy in 1980, and Bill Bradley in 2000. We do not need another George McGovern disaster for the Democratic Party which, particularly in this election would impact every resident of the United States. If by some weird confluence of events we have Sanders as a candidate, ask Debbie Wasserman Schultz what she possibly could have been thinking.

I think back to the National Convention of 1968, at that time National Delegates were chosen by the delegates to the State Convention and the State Convention was basically controlled by the late John Bailey who was then both chairman of the State Democratic Party and chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Bailey did not want a primary

since that would have been embarrassing to him and a sign of lack of leadership to the people in Washington, including Hubert Humphry who was the “establishment candidate.”

What happened was that Bailey, Catherine Quinn who was Secretary of the Democratic State Central Committee, and myself, along with one or two other people whose names I can't recall, met in the so-called “Green Room” at the Bushnell and decided that we would give the people who were supporting U. S. Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota (who ran against Humphry at the convention) 12 delegates. Among the delegates selected was Paul Newman, his wife Joanne Woodward, Arthur Miller, Irving Stolberg who later became Speaker of the House in the state General Assembly. At that time I was the Senate Majority Leader.

I am not in any way implying that it was democracy at work, but it *was* leadership at work. The bottom line is Connecticut did not have a divisive primary and although Humphrey lost the election to Richard Nixon, Bailey was able to hang on to his leadership positions both here and nationally.

Was that system better than the existing one? In all honesty I'm not certain, but I'm also not certain if the existing system works since so much of what occurs in a primary is based on who can get out the vote and who develops a following like the next Messiah, which is what has happened with Sanders.

Sanders raves and rants but basically his theme is generally the same: You would have a better life if it weren't for the people on Wall Street that make millions and billions of dollars. Part of that may be true, but this is America and we are a capitalist society and it's a country where everyone has the opportunity to make it. All you have to do is look at Obama, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter and others like them over the years who basically started with nothing and ended up as President.

Leadership is vital in heading a party both on a state level and national level. I believe that Debbie Wasserman Shultz has failed the Democratic Party and has put Hillary Clinton into a hotly contested primary season -- that need not have happened if Wasserman had simply indicated that Sanders, an avowed socialist, who had never before registered as a Democrat, could not run as a Democrat.

In New Hampshire as well as several other states anyone can vote in a Democratic Primary. That is a bad idea and concept. After all it is not a general election and if anyone can vote they vote for in essence against candidates for different reasons. There are many Republicans and some Independents who have supported Sanders only because they know that Hillary is electable and Sander is not. That type of voting pattern was clearly in play in New Hampshire. It should not be permitted. Cross over voting is not what a Democratic Primary is all about.

There's no question in my mind that the Democratic Party needs a new chairperson who understands what leadership means, with the gumption and common sense to lead the party, not to permit a non-Democrat to run as a candidate in what after all are Democratic Party Primaries.

Edward Marcus is former chairman of the Democrat State Central Committee in Connecticut, former state Senate majority leader, and principal of Branford-based [Marcus Law Firm](#).