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It's Time to Move Forward from the Democratic Party's 2016 Mess

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And time to focus on what matters.

Back last June, when hopes were high and Hillary Rodham Clinton had the presidency in the satchel, she was exploring her options as to a vice presidential candidate, who surely would have become vice president because HRC had the presidency in the satchel. There was one candidate on the list that got corporate America particularly nervous, and several of their intellectual mouthpieces were sent out to tell scary ghost stories about the guy. A dude from the Competitive Enterprise Institute rolled out the ol' roogie-roogie. Per [NRO](#):

"His rewriting of U.S. labor law is probably the most fundamental attack on the free-enterprise system going on at present...If he has his way, we won't just revert to the 1930s. We'll do things that even Franklin Roosevelt couldn't do, like eliminate vast numbers of independent-contractor jobs and unionize those that remain."

And a guy from the Cato Institute held up the disembodied head of Lady Liberty.

"He essentially operationalized Eric Holder's radicalization of the Department of Justice. No civil-rights theory too crazy to pursue, no litigants too awkward to pay off."

Mitch McConnell didn't much like the guy.

"[He is] a committed ideologue who appears willing, quite frankly, to say or do anything to achieve his ideological end."

And what would a good, gory conservative slasher flick be without a contribution from Judicial Watch.

"[He] has shown a glaring inability to tell the truth and dispassionately apply the basic constitutional tenet of 'equal justice under law.'"

So, who was this Bakuninte mole-in-waiting, anyway? I'm glad you asked. It was Tom Perez, then the Secretary of Labor under Barack Obama who on Saturday afternoon was elected the

next chairman of the Democratic Party despite being a Wall Street toady, a tool of the money power, and a neoliberal—at least in the minds of many of the people who opposed him. Sometimes, I imagine that being a Democrat can be very confusing.

"We're ready to hit the ground running," Perez said. "Our party succeeds when our party has a president in all the states and territories. The mission of this committee is to elect people from the school committee to the Senate."

"I think Tom was quite clear," said Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota, whom Perez named Deputy Chair of the committee immediately after the vote. "Anybody who supported me in this race, I thank you. But I want you to support Tom Perez. If you care about people who have their loved ones' cemeteries being desecrated, you got to support Tom Perez. This is not a small thing. The very fate of our nation is in the balance right now. I trust Tom Perez. If they trust me, they have to trust Tom Perez. There's a lot of action but it has to be channeled into the Democratic party. "

On the day's second ballot, Perez defeated Ellison, who'd jumped into the race early and had managed the not-inconsiderable parlay of being the favored candidate of both the Bernie Sanders element within the party and of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. Perez got in late, not announcing his candidacy until December, long after Ellison had declared his. To be honest, this gave Perez's candidacy a slightly piscatorial aroma.

For all his progressive bona fides, which are considerable, Perez was plainly convinced to run by people in the party who were unsure they wanted to be led by a progressive Muslim from Minnesota. (There also was some unpleasant and truthless whispering that Ellison might be an anti-Semite.) These included folks from the vestiges of the HRC campaign as well as, reportedly, a number of people who worked for the previous president. All of which immediately set up within the DNC chairmanship race an extended re-litigation of the Democratic primary fight that was best left forgotten. I didn't think it was possible for me to hate that campaign more than I did when it ended last spring. I was wrong.

The afternoon began with the Sandersite wing in full cry. The DNC defeated a motion to revive an Obama-era ban on corporate and/or lobbyist contributions to the DNC itself. The most plaintive appeal against reviving the ban came from a national committeeman from Utah who said, essentially, "Hey, I'm a Democrat from freaking Utah here. Somebody cut me some slack before I have to go sell apples on the sidewalk in Temple Square." (The renewed impact of the money power in politics again, touched off by the Citizens United decision has settled in as a hard and fast fait accompli. As noted Trumpite Bill Belichick has observed, "You play the game by the rules that are, not the ones you wish were there.") The fact that the ban was defeated—and on a very clear voice vote, too—probably was the first indication that there was just enough daylight between Perez and Ellison for the former to win.

After TV favorite Pete Buttigieg dropped out suddenly while giving his nominating speech, Perez missed being elected by one vote on the first ballot. (This left Idaho's Sally Boynton

Brown, and her 12 votes, in possession of the keys to the kingdom, and it temporarily made SBB the most powerful Idaho Democrat since Frank Church.) For all his visibility, Mayor Pete had startling little support among the people in the room who actually voted. On the second ballot, Perez picked up 19 votes, while Ellison remained at exactly the same total he'd had on the first.

Perez and Ellison took questions together from the press after the balloting was done and both of them seemed to get along quite splendidly. (They both called for an independent investigation into the ties between the Trump campaign and Russia with equal fervor.) And if the whole exercise this weekend accomplishes nothing else except to lay forever the ghost of the 2016 Democratic primaries and to salt the earth so its poxy memory never rises again, then the DNC Winter Meeting will have done American politics an incalculable good.