# Olighical Control Deflated When it Initially Let Pseudo-democracy Overwhelm its Process

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Observing the *mishegoss* of the 2015-2016 American presidential primaries provides an example of a committed membership organization *posturing* like it is a group open to all comers—and provided the means by which outsiders "democratically" constrained its operations. Do not get me wrong, I am not supporting or objecting to the process, but looking at how pseudo-democracy confounded an oligarchy.

Prior to running, the Democrat outside contender was an Independent political member of the U.S. Senate; albeit, he caucused with Dems. The Republican was a private-sector, rich businessman who was not previously active in either party and in the past donated funds to politicians from both parties. Both "outsiders" challenged contestants that were party members, who at the time or previously held political office under their respective party label. Ironically, not a product of the *established* political organization, they both were still able to declare their candidacy under its purview. Primaries made it possible to garner delegates by directly appealing to citizens in a seemingly democratic process.

For different reasons, both candidates were able to fund their campaigns without the party *establishment's* financial resources. Trump had personal wealth and Sanders attracted millions of small donors who supported his socialist agenda. Both of them undermined a party's fundamental control mechanism—**funds**. It usually takes money to garner citizens' votes. Also ironic, the rich candidate found a way to get free publicity through the news/entertainment industry by making what were traditionally unpolitical statements.

Very late and with many good-faith votes cast, the party *establishments* unveiled their oligarchical nature. Internal machinations of party politics were not publically evident in initial primaries and to some-extent in early caucus states. As the outsiders gathered support beyond expectation, party rules and convention-representative personal commitments came into play. The public got to see the underbelly of *establishment* (mis)handling of the process. Cruz and Clinton played inside games by committing partisan delegates and super delegates with what is called a ground game, suitable for garnering thousands, while disenfranchising millions.

By not initially playing by the *establishment* rules, Trump was able to rant against their unfairness to millions of his voters. For awhile he took grief for not knowing how to garner convention delegates who were truly committed to him. Sanders had a crusader's message and sufficient *non-establishment* votes to claim a path to the nomination and a small-donation populace that kept financing his "message."

Unexpected developments forced the parties to expose in 2016 they are not democracies. Initially, they desired an appearance of being <u>d</u>emocratic (small <u>d</u>) and paid the piper.

## The Political Party System

National elections are based upon popular votes that are adjusted to distribute influence across the nation. Otherwise a few large population areas would swamp the influence of the smaller states. While some argue the fairness of the Electoral College, it is a law of the land. It also sets the stage for lengthy primary campaigns, across many states.

Each state has a party structure, some effective, others are not so good. It is hierarchical from the state chairperson, through county chair, to town leader, and down to locality representatives. Individuals enter the system at the local level and may walk door-to-door gathering signatures on petitions for party candidates and themself. Beginning politicians will *usually* start running for office within his or her town. The ambitious will make contacts with other towns in their county and then expand outward and upward. The county chair is the gateway to movement beyond one's own town. Mavericks are usually kept somewhat in check.

The foundation for the active participants are *registered* voters. While registrants may not have attended meetings or provided the legwork, they officially declared a party preference and are likely to be approached to support party regulars. It is a self-serving system that gets behind its members. Many political party decisions are made in town meetings, with all delegates voting, and these same people may vote personally at county-wide assemblies . They elect an executive committee to handle ongoing business. The county organizations select representatives to the state organizations and conventions. Obviously, the system is hierarchical and the amount of freedom within the system is dependent upon the power and personality of various chairs, up to the extreme example of the "party boss."

Some states' committees have opened their candidate selection process to primary elections by the public. Voters may be limited to declared party members or open to all who are registered. In the latter case, there is the debatable effectiveness of crossovers' votes in their opponent's primary. Others allow instant registration. Shenanigans are not unknown in the competition for voting delegates.

## Unintended Consequences of Pseudo- democracy

*"This above all: to thine own self be true"*

This advice was given by Polonius to his son Laertes in *Hamlet*. Likewise, an organization needs to be true to its nature and operate within congruent boundaries. To wit, a national political party exists to serve its own members and is not a structure to be used by anyone needing a banner by which to run for president. (Feasibility of a third-party alternative is not a consideration herein.) Pertinent is the pseudo-democracy projected as the presidential primaries began that gave uninformed voters the mistaken impression their votes were binding on delegates and they became irate when belatedly told that is not the way the system works.