

Commentary on a New York Times' article

by Phillip W. Weiss

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Senate Republicans Pass Sweeping Tax Bill¹

By JIM TANKERSLEY, THOMAS KAPLAN and ALAN RAPPEPORT, DEC. 1, 2017

The passing of the Senate tax bill is further proof of the marginalization of the Democratic Party. Starting with their loss of control of the Congress in the 2010 elections, and continuing with their spectacular and devastating failure to elect Hillary Clinton in 2016, today the Democratic Party is reduced to a group of reactive complainers devoid of new ideas, and out of touch with huge sectors of the American electorate.

The media, most of which openly supports the Democratic Party, is caught in a quandary. If they report the news accurately, then that will further bolster the prestige of Republican Party, which, in the form of a massive and sweeping tax bill, is actually producing something. But if they continue spewing out spin masqueraded as news then they risk further eroding public confidence in the media as a credible source of information.

But the media also has another problem. Since the emergence of Donald Trump, the media's monopoly on news dissemination has been dramatically curtailed. Use of online social networks now provides the president direct access to the public. No longer does a president have to pander to the media to get out his or her message.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/us/politics/senate-tax-bill.html?ref=todayspaper>

Likewise with the Republicans as it relates to the Democrats. No longer do the Republicans need to seriously deal with the Democratic Party to get major legislation passed. The article reports, "Democrats opposed the tax bill as a bloc, saying it was meant to help the wealthy and not the middle class." Yet, the Democrats' unanimous opposition could not stop this bill from passing or prevent last-minute revisions. Nor does it seem likely that this powerlessness is a condition that for the Democrats will change anytime soon.

The party of Franklin D. Roosevelt is now a mere shell of its former self. This does not mean that the Democratic Party is finished as a serious political force. This year Democratic candidates won elections in New Jersey and Virginia. In certain regions of the United States, Democrats still can win. But on the national level, the chances of the Democratic Party regaining control of the Congress or winning the presidency are slim.

But in politics, anything can happen. The party that is floundering today can make a sudden and dramatic resurgence. However, for now, all the Democrats can do is react, complain, and cajole. Right now, the public debate is about tax cuts, not progressivism, and it is Donald Trump and the Republican Party who are setting the agenda and shaping public opinion. Until the Democratic Party recaptures the ideological initiative, like it did in 1932 and 1964, and to limited degree in 2008, it will continue to lag behind the Republicans. For the Democrats, that formula does not win elections.

