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BY M. G. PIETY
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Smash and Grab Politics

6:00pm, EST January 6. Protestors stormed the capital today. Main-stream media swiftly switched, however, from referring to them as “protestors” to calling them “traitors,” “insurrectionists,” and “domestic terrorists.” Why? Are they violent? Are they threatening violence? Are they calling for the overthrow of the government? Apparently, they broke a window to get inside the capital. Once inside, however, it appears they were remarkably orderly. A [photo of a protestor in Nancy Pelosi’s office](#) suggests he didn’t even disturb the papers on her desk, let alone damage any of the furniture.

Are they shouting “Down with the U.S.!” as so many anti-Vietnam protestors were allowed to do while still retaining their designation as “protestors,” rather than “traitors.” No, in fact, many are carrying American flags. They are America Firsters who feel that the political establishment has become a collection of individualists who have no loyalty to anything but their own personal enrichment, a bunch of elitists who couldn’t care less about what happens to the country so long as they get theirs.

Sadly, they are correct.

Unfortunately, they’re deluded in thinking that Trump is some kind of populist champion. He’s just not part of the political establishment. That’s how little faith most people have in the system now, pretty much *any* outsider is more attractive to many, if not most, Americans than someone from inside the system. A significant proportion of Sanders’ supporters [voted for Trump in 2016](#). What does that tell you? What ought it to tell you? The two could hardly be more different in terms of the actual substance of their ideological leanings. What united them was that they were outsiders. Sanders might be more a part of the political establishment than his supporters took him to be, but he didn’t sound like one. His rhetoric was genuinely populist. That’s what Sanders and Trump had in common. They were not contemptuous of working people, of poor people, of the increasing proportion of the population that is being trampled by the stampede of global capitalism.

The protestors who took over the Capital today believe Trump really won the election and are demanding proof that he didn't. They may have little evidence to support this belief, but the system has only fueled the flames of their suspicions by refusing to hear the various challenges to the election results. The challenges may well have been without merit, but presumably, that would have become apparent relatively quickly if they had been seriously considered rather than simply dismissed.

You know what happens when you summarily refuse to listen to people? They become angry. They become angry and they lose faith in you because a summary dismissal of a genuine, if ill-founded concern, evinces contempt for the person whose concern it is. Contempt sows the seeds of reciprocal contempt.

CNN is once again employing its favorite informal fallacy, the false dichotomy. "You're either a patriot or a traitor" [Jake Tapper intoned in response to the protestors](#). And yet the protestors are not chanting "Down with the U.S.!" They have not lost faith in the country. They have simply lost faith in the political establishment and they've lost that faith because they've seen the members of that establishment grow increasingly wealthy at the expense of the average Americans. The protestors may have smashed windows in the Capital, but elected officials in one administration after another have repeatedly smashed what few protections once existed for working people. They have smashed what few protections once existed for the health and safety of the average worker, for decent wages and decent and affordable healthcare and education. They have smashed much, if not everything, that once made this country great in [an ecstasy of fumbling](#) for the riches their vandalism freed up.

Smash and grab politics, that's what we have in the U.S. Is it any wonder people are so angry? Their anger may be misdirected, but anger is often like that. The solution is not more name calling. That will only make people angrier. The solution is real positive change.

The ball is in Biden's court.

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