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Frames and The Left



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Social media in politics gets a bad name from its well-known, highly unpleasant side.

This is where facts and analytical reasoning are dismissed immediately and loudly because of their source, and not on their substance; there is personal abuse and scorn for intellectual scrutiny and rigour ; and where trivia and irrelevance are regularly used to deflect and distract from important political issues.

Some of these Tweets and Facebook posts every so often become items of news in the print and broadcasting media as examples of their ugly vehemence.

There is, however, another sphere of political activity with the same objective of reinforcing Right Wing views other than the echo chamber of political social

media.

This sphere is one in which the Left have been trying to play catch up with the Right over the past few decades.

This is the world of “framing” political messages.

In the US, the Republican Party have been the masters of the politics of The Flag and division, backed by decades of megabucks of Right- Wing investment in a profusion of Institutes, Foundations, consultancies, books, and magazines - and in the media, radio shock jocks and Fox News described by a prominent Democrat as a “right wing propaganda machine” being particular examples, and support for the Religious Right.

Their aim has been to steer political debate through their “frames” of thinking and to dictate the “narrative” of political issues

By doing so, the Right seek to transform the language of politics into a language created by the Right which is discussed , broadcast, and published every day, on an agenda set by the Right, and with the ultimate aim of making Left voters vote against their economic interests.

The Republicans have been highly disciplined in campaigning on “values” and emotional appeals.

In contrast, the Democrats have campaigned on policies.

More often than not in recent times, the “values” approach of the Right have won over the “policies” approach of the Left.

Why has this been the case?



George Lakoff is an Left-of-centre American cognitive linguist, and author of the famous book “Don’t think of an elephant” that deals with the framing of progressive values that are the precursors of political policies and programmes in a language with an emotional and rhetorical appeal.

Asked, “What are the limitations of rational discourse and presenting public policy proposals as reasonable in electoral politics? How do certain narratives ignite an emotional response that overrides a logical argument?”

Lakoff replies, : The question presupposes a classical view of "rational argument," namely the use of classical logic (e.g., mathematical logic) in the service of self-interest.

"But that is not how real rationality works."

So, to conclude part one of this essay, here is Bernie Sanders framing progressive values and principles , and so shaping the case for the Left.

(Click on the images below to view the videos)

