

# Understanding the Trump phenomenon

Listening to the “liberal left” trying to explain the Trump phenomenon is a frustrating experience. Of course I agree with them that all elected politicians should condemn any efforts to whip up racial hatred. What interests me is they say that the big Trump vote was only possible because of the large inequalities they see today. These must be inequalities thrown up by the last eight years of Democrat rule, as there was no Trump insurgency eight years ago. Presumably they would argue that today’s inequalities build on inequalities in earlier decades which were not large enough or obvious enough to produce a Trump. They see the Trump phenomenon as a protest vote against these inequalities.

There is a germ of truth in what they are saying. Many people who were fed up with low wages or no wages voted for Mr Trump. They did not however vote for him to protest against inequality. They voted for him to cut their taxes and fire up America’s economy so they can get a bit richer. They voted for him in the full knowledge that he is a very rich man, was going to be surrounded by many other rich men, and favoured cutting the taxes the rich pay as well as the taxes lower paid people pay. They were not jealous of Mr Trump’s riches. They want some of them to rub off on them.

The germ of truth comes in these voters attitudes towards Mrs Clinton. There were two types of privilege and wealth on offer in the two contrasting Presidential candidates. Mr Trump offered the version of entrepreneurial riches, acquired by himself or some would say with help from his father’s business acumen. This is completely acceptable to most Trump voters. They do not mind if an entrepreneur makes large sums and pays himself fabulous money. Nor do they baulk at soccer or baseball stars, singers or actors earning great money either. They willingly pay for their services, and have the choice not to.

The type of privilege they object to is privilege that comes through political office and big budget politics. The lurid rhetoric of Trump supporters, often going beyond the tough language of the campaign proper, concentrated on “the swamp” of Washington, seeing it as a source of corruption. Mrs Clinton herself faced endless disobliging chants and allegations, as she was the perfect representative of those with families that draw big salaries from the state and live in a world of big budgets from party financing. Voters thought big politics had let them down, was syphoning off too much of their money through taxes they had to pay, and was rewarding for those in it, not for those it should seek to serve.

Trump voters worried about easy migration because they think wages have been depressed too much. They worried about trade systems which allow so many foreign imports, because they want to help make those things at home. They worried about just how much they have to pay to Washington in taxes when they need to spend more on their own needs. They will not mind if Mr Trump allows rich people to become richer, as long as they become richer too.