

Why do the “liberal” establishment so hate democracy?

On both sides of the Atlantic in relatively free societies with open and fair elections and referenda there is a nasty anger at the results from some who claim the moral high ground of being the “liberal” establishment. I too have no time for racism or undemocratic attitudes, but think many voters for so called populist parties and causes are decent people making good points about the change they wish to see.

Indeed, it is becoming so bad that in most advanced country democracies now the liberal elite fulminate against those the voters choose to elect. In the USA they pour bile on the elected President, Donald Trump. In Italy they complain that 5 Star and Lega who commanded a majority of the votes and seats at the recent election should not be in government as they do not conform to the Euro scheme. In Greece they used to reject the verdict of the people when they voted for Syriza to sweep aside the old parties and to go on to challenge austerity, but are less concerned now Syriza has conformed with their views. In the Netherlands the Wilders party topped the poll but is widely disliked. The governments of Poland and Hungary are seen as enemies of Brussels and of the establishment. The liberal elite are full of disapproval for the Brexit vote in the UK. Only in France has a populist movement met with approval, because it is one under Macron that seeks more European integration.

So why is there this contempt for the will of the people? It seems the so called “liberal” elite are worried about the obvious challenges to two of their pet projects. In Europe they are very concerned about the unpopularity of the austerity policies they impose on Euro states. Despite this causing high unemployment and poor economic growth much of the time, the elite insists there is no alternative to the limits imposed on borrowing and state debt. In Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland and elsewhere the EU effectively puts up taxes and cuts spending in national budgets. In both Europe and the USA they seem upset that populists including the all important President Trump are not keen to become entangled in religious and civil wars in the Middle East. The elite prefers the Clinton approach of engagement, bombing and if necessary the commitment of advisers and troops to proxy armies on the ground.

The issue the elite most mention unfavourably is that of migration. They dislike the way people on both sides of the Atlantic vote for fewer migrants to come. They argue that this makes the populist parties racist. It is true there is a minority of voters and even politicians motivated by racial and religious considerations. This is not true of most of the voters, who simply argue for lower numbers. It is the populist voters who complain of the consequences of rapid migration that they think creates housing shortages, lower wages, and pressure on public services. It is the elite who welcome cheap labour for their businesses or as helps in their own homes.