

The Economist
February 13, 2016

New Hampshire and beyond

Trumped and Berned

A tycoon selling snake-oil and an aged leftie won the first primary. Oh dear

NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE



THE nativist rage Donald Trump is whooping up across America translates into actual votes—lots of them. So does the left-wing populism with which Bernie Sanders is thrilling an expanding chunk of the Democratic Party. These were the messages of the New Hampshire primary held on February 9th; and their repercussions, blown from the icy New England state down south and out west, where America's quarrelsome primary contest moves to next, could be tremendous.

Mr Trump hoovered up 35% of the vote in New Hampshire. John Kasich, the governor of Ohio, came second with 16%. That means the Republican establishment still has no answer to Mr Trump's assault on conservative ideology and their party's good name; or to Ted Cruz, an ultra-

conservative troublemaker who won in Iowa and came third in New Hampshire. Mr Kasich is too pragmatic and, in a fraught time, too genial for most Republican primary voters. Marco Rubio, a likelier establishment champion who was widely expected to surge from the mainstream pack, did abysmally. He won less than 11%, which put him fifth behind Jeb Bush, the ridiculed scion of a divisive dynasty.

Democratic Party bosses were similarly confounded. They think Mr Sanders could not win a general election; they are probably right. The veteran senator vows to break up banks, make college education free, squeeze the pips out of rich people, then squeeze them again. He calls himself a democratic socialist; most Americans hear only the second word, and shudder. Yet he won 60% of the vote in New Hampshire, which represented one of the biggest victories in a contested Democratic primary—and trouble for Hillary Clinton.

Mr Sanders trounced the Democratic front-runner in almost every voter group. Exit polls suggested he won over 80% of younger voters, which was startling, if predicted, given how college crowds love to “feel the Bern”. He also beat Mrs Clinton among men and women, college graduates and non-graduates, those with guns and those without. The only voters who mainly stayed loyal to Mrs Clinton were high-earners and those aged 65 and over.

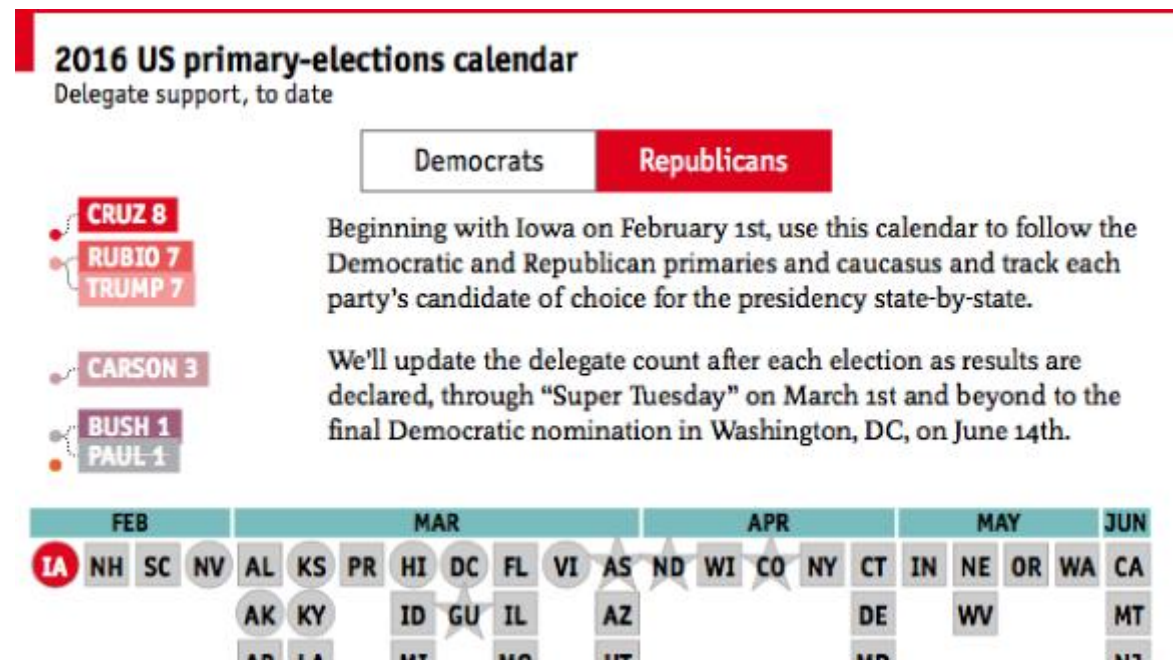
At an almost-hysterically upbeat defeat rally, Mrs Clinton acknowledged that she needed to do more to win the love of youngsters. But it is the votes of Hispanics and, especially, blacks that will now concern her most. African-Americans, who have hitherto favoured Mrs Clinton over Mr Sanders by 3:1, represent half of all Democrats in South Carolina, which will hold its primary on February 27th. So long as Mrs Clinton can keep them onside, she will probably win the nomination. Yet, given the immensity of Mr Sanders’s victory, that seems a bit less certain than it did.

He had a couple of big advantages in New Hampshire. It is crammed with white lefties, his main target audience, and next-door to Vermont, which he has represented in Washington for a quarter of a century. Yet the result also showed how fundamental Mrs Clinton’s weaknesses are. She represents continuity, and voters want change; exit polls in New Hampshire suggest that 42% of Democrats want a more left-wing president than Barack Obama. They, naturally, are another group Mr Sanders swept. He promises a “political revolution”; Mrs Clinton pledges to secure Mr Obama’s legacy. With a little tinkering, that should not be a losing promise; the president is extremely popular among Democrats. The trouble for Mrs Clinton is that, despite her cool head, tough streak and ironclad grip on policy, she lacks the subtlety and easy charisma that lesser politicians would deploy to change gears.

She has charm, but of a programmatic sort. Having failed, so far, to fire up many women with the promise of America’s first woman president, she is struggling even to get them to like her. A persistent controversy over her use of a private e-mail account as secretary of state has made that harder, by playing to her reputation for being rather shifty. Her supporters decry both, reputation and scandal, as malicious Republican slander, of which there has been plenty aimed at Mrs Clinton. But the impression endures, and there is little reason to think black and Hispanic voters, whom Mr Sanders is about to lovebomb with revolutionary promises, will be immune to it. “I worry that Hillary is dishonest,” said Reina Rodriguez, a retired teacher emerging from a polling

station in the New Hampshire town of Nashua, after casting her vote for Mr Sanders. She thought the senator “a beautiful politician, a true democrat”. Ominously for Mrs Clinton, she was speaking in Spanish.

If Mrs Clinton must rethink, her old New York buddy, Mr Trump, can rejoice. In Iowa, the property tycoon performed less well than opinion polls suggested he should. That implied his support was flaky, because the working-class whites who flock to his rallies, to hear him crack jokes, insult people and promise border walls, do not flock to vote. Mr Trump did little to salve that concern. He campaigned less in New Hampshire than almost any of his rivals, spending only 30 days in the state and little money. Much of what he spent went on aviation fuel and red baseball caps emblazoned with his Reaganite slogan, “Make America Great Again”. His campaign had the look of a Potemkin effort, cobbled together in a half-hearted bid to show journalists he was serious. Mr Bush, by comparison, spent 57 days in the state; he and the super-PAC supporting him, Right to Rise, spent \$30m on television advertising there, chiefly to attack his mainstream rivals, Mr Rubio, Mr Kasich and Chris Christie, the governor of New Jersey.



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For Republican patricians and moneymen, Mr Rubio's failure was an even bigger shock than Mr Trump's win. Had the senator from Florida merely repeated his performance in Iowa, by beating his mainstream rivals convincingly, he would have been saluted as the man to foil Messrs Trump and Cruz—and his campaign deluged with money. That could still happen. Mr Rubio is suffering from a perception that he is too green to be president. An ill-timed gaffe in a televised debate on February 6th, in which Mr Rubio responded to Mr Christie's accusation that he was rote-learned and untested by robotically repeating a rehearsed attack on Mr Obama, appears to have reinforced that. Yet he remains clever and attractive—and if he is not to be the mainstream Republican champion, it is not at all clear who is.

Mr Bush has money, but seems as alien to the Republican mood as Mr Kasich. Mr Christie, who won a pathetic 7% of the New Hampshire vote, has dropped out. Worse for the patricians, the identity of the putative anti-Trump, anti-Cruz candidate, for whom about 40% of the primary vote is available, now cannot be settled until after the party's South Carolina primary on February 20th. That is excellent for Mr Trump and Mr Cruz, who spent similar time and less money in New Hampshire than the Donald. They can concentrate on building their campaigns and racking up delegates. Mr Rubio and the rest are meanwhile locked in a mutually enfeebling brawl.

Not that any of them is likely to do particularly well in South Carolina. Opinion polls put Mr Trump just as far ahead there as he was in New Hampshire, with 36% of the vote. They put Mr Cruz, with 20%, securely in second place. All the mainstreamers are lagging far behind.

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