

February 20, 2016

Dear Paul,

Your [suggestion](#) that “personal ambition” in any way influenced my analysis of the Sanders economic plan is as insulting as it is wrong and you owe me an apology.

You don’t know me. We did not quite overlap in graduate school and our paths have diverged since. We have never met or spoken. The closest we came was when my department attempted to bring you to Amherst to give a guest lecture. Never happened because we could not afford your rate.

While you don’t know me, you seem to feel free to speculate about my values and interests. You assume that an outsider economist like myself must be considered not particularly “insightful or even technically competent.” And, elaborating this theory, you conclude that envy would lead me to jump on an opportunity for self-advancement by shilling for an outsider politician. Now this theory might be tested empirically. You could easily have tested your theory by investigating my motives empirically. You could have called me and asked. Or you could have read any of the news stories where I explained how I stumbled on this research project, and where I explained my (lack of) connection to the Sanders campaign. You might have asked people who know me. Had you done so, you would know how much I value my privacy, enjoy living and working in Amherst. And, I assure you, people would have laughed at any suggestion that I have political ambitions or want to go to Washington to hobnob with the powerful.

Since you did not bother to do the empirical work: let me do it for you. I undertook this study from simple scholarly curiosity; I did it without any connection to the Sanders campaign; and I have no expectation of reward. I have no desire to be involved in a Sanders Administration. I am completely happy teaching at UMass-Amherst and have no wish for anything more in the world than to do my work where I am.

Finally, if I may point out another flaw in your envy-ambition model: why would the Sanders camp ever appoint someone who has publicly acknowledged that he donates to the Hillary Clinton campaign and is undecided about for whom to vote in the upcoming Massachusetts primary?

In its lack of empirical grounding, your column is like the CEA-chairs’ letter: substituting attack language and *ad hominem* argument for reasoned discourse. If you had taken the time to read my paper, you would find, as [others have](#), that I evaluate the Sanders program using standard assumptions and methods. Rather than jumping on my conclusion, a more constructive discussion would focus on identifying possible errors in my method that may have led to

conclusions that may seem implausible. Certainly, we can agree that it is illogical to reject conclusions without finding fault with method.

By the way, you also owe me an apology for another smear. I have never in any way vilified or blackened “the reputation of more insider types.” If you had taken the time to do empirical research, you would know that when asked to respond to the CEA-chair letter, I have expressed genuine respect for them and their work, and have refused to comment on their motives, saying, like a broken record, “you have to ask them.” I do not know why they wrote that letter, will not speculate, and have not speculated. Nor will I speculate as to your motives.

Best wishes,

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