

closed minds, hostile to expertise, aggressively uninterested in evidence, whose idea of a policy argument involves loudly repeating the same old debunked doctrines. Paul Ryan's "

innovative " proposals of 2011 (cut taxes and privatize Medicare) were almost indistinguishable from those of Newt Gingrich in 1995. # Meanwhile, Democrats have experienced an intellectual renaissance. They have emerged from their 1990s cringe; they're no longer afraid to challenge conservative pieties; and there's a lot of serious, well-informed intraparty debate about issues from health care to climate change. # You don't have to agree with any of the various Medicare for All plans, or proposals for a Green New Deal, to recognize that these are important ideas receiving serious discussion. # The question is whether our media environment can handle a real party of ideas. Can news organizations tell the difference between genuine policy wonks and poseurs like Ryan? Are they even willing to discuss policy rather than snark about candidates' supposed personality flaws? # Which brings me to the case of Elizabeth Warren, who is probably today's closest equivalent to Moynihan in his prime. # Like Moynihan, she's a serious intellectual turned influential politician. Her scholarly work on bankruptcy and its relationship to rising inequality made her a major player in policy debate long before she entered politics herself. Like many others, I found one of her key insights -- that rising bankruptcy rates weren't caused by profligate consumerism, that they largely reflected the desperate attempts of middle-class families to buy homes in good school districts -- revelatory. # She has also proved herself able to translate scholarly insights into practical policy. Full disclosure: I was skeptical about her brainchild, the Consumer Financial Protection