

# Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog of Brad DeLong. Comments (mostly) welcome, or email me at [delong@hey.com](mailto:delong@hey.com) with "delong-weblog" as the subject.  
RSS feed.  
Also on twitter [@delong](https://twitter.com/delong). Since 1999.

## The Optimate Faction Rejects Caesar's Compromise: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic



A strongly unconventional high politician facing the expiration of his term of office. He knows that there is a very high probability that, because of his actions in office, his adversaries will try and convict him of crimes after he lays down his power.

Caesar narrates the reasons that the leaders of the Optimate faction—Cato, Lentulus, Scipio, and Pompey—worked hard to set the stage for war, and how the majority of Senators in the timorous middle were robbed of the power to decide freely, and driven reluctantly to vote for Scipio's motion to rob Caesar of his protections against arrest and trial:

**Gaius Julius Caesar:** *The Civil War*: '[The Optimate faction Consul] Lucius Lentulus took up all the speakers and routed them with a withering reply. He refused point blank to put Calidius's motion, and his strictures cowed Marcellus, so that he too gave up his motion. And so the majority, under pressure from the consul's tirades together with fear at the proximity of the army and the menaces of Pompey's friends, were driven reluctantly to support Scipio's motion. The terms of this were that Caesar should disband his army before a date to be fixed; if he failed to comply, he would be deemed to be meditating treason against the State...

...Mark Antony and Quintus Cassius, tribunes of the people, then interposed their veto. There was a hurried debate on this veto and harsh measures were advocated; and the more savage and vindictive the speaker, the more he was applauded by Caesar's enemies.

When the Senate was dismissed towards evening, all its members were summoned out of the city by Pompey. Those who were prompt to obey he praised and encouraged to continue so; the less quick he reproved and urged to do better. Many veterans from Pompey's old armies were called out from their homes by the prospect of rewards and advancement, and many troops were summoned from the two legions handed over by Caesar.

The city, the approach to the Capitol and the comitium [election square] were full of tribunes, centurions and recalled veterans. All the friends of the consuls, all the adherents of Pompey and of those with old grudges against Caesar were mustered in the Senate. Their numbers and the uproar they made intimidated the timorous, made up the minds of the waverers and robbed the majority of the power to decide freely.

Censor Lucius Piso and Praetor Lucius Roscius undertook to go and inform Caesar of these events, and asked for a period of six days to fulfil their mission. Some speakers further suggested that a deputation should be sent to Caesar to acquaint him with the feelings of the Senate. All these suggestions were opposed in speeches by the consul, by Scipio and by Cato, each for his own reasons.

Cato was an old enemy of Caesar's and, besides, he was stung by his defeat at the elections.

Lentulus was actuated by the size of his debts, and by the prospect of a military command and a province and bribes from native rulers for the recognition of their titles. He boasted among his friends that he would be a second Sulla and hold supreme command in the State.

Scipio had the same hopes of a province, and of military command, for he expected to share the armies with Pompey as a relative [father-in-law] of his by marriage. Besides, he had a dread of the law courts and was susceptible to the flattery of certain persons of great influence in politics and in the courts at the time, as well as being swayed by his own and their love of display.

Pompey, for his part, was reluctant to let anyone stand on the same pinnacle of prestige as himself. For this reason, and also because he had been listening to Caesar's enemies, he had completely severed his friendly connexions with Caesar. He had become reconciled with their common enemies—most of whom he had himself inflicted on Caesar at the time when he contracted a marriage alliance with him. Moreover, he was perturbed by the discredit attaching to his behaviour over the two legions, which he had diverted from the expedition to Asia and Syria, in order to advance his own power and supremacy. Pompey, therefore, was anxious to force a decision by war. Accordingly, haste and confusion characterized every transaction...

.#history #livebloggingthefalloftheromanrepublic #politics #2020-07-22

Posted on July 22, 2020 at 15:07 in #politics | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

### Comments

Comment below or sign in with [Typepad](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) and more...

(You can use HTML tags like <b> <i> and <ul> to style your text. URLs automatically linked.)

Email address is not displayed with comment.

POWERED BY [TypePad](#)

Donate

Submit

### >About Brad DeLong

Brad DeLong's Short Biography