

Sanders pledges his campaign to save Democratic Party

Patrick Martin
31 August 2015

In a speech Friday afternoon to the Democratic National Committee, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders portrayed his presidential campaign as the only way to rebuild popular support for the Democratic Party and save its electoral prospects in 2016.

It was the first time that Sanders, a nominal independent through a quarter century in Congress, has appeared before the leading body of the Democratic Party. The occasion was a summer session of the DNC addressed by four of the five declared candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Sanders pointed to the indications of popular support for his campaign, including large crowds at rallies, hundreds of thousands of volunteers and small contributors, and especially “many young people who have not previously been involved in the political process.”

Then he told his audience, consisting largely of members of the DNC and elected officials, that they needed this infusion of political energy to revive the political fortunes of the Democratic Party.

“The Republicans did not win the mid-term election in November,” he argued. “The Democrats lost that election because voter turnout was abysmally low, and millions of working people, minorities and young people gave up on ‘politics as usual’ and stayed home.”

This is certainly true: the right-wing policies of the Obama administration and the Democrats in Congress, on war, government spying, cuts in social programs, and attacks on the jobs and living standards of working people, dashed the illusions of those who had turned out to elect Obama in 2008 and re-elect him in 2012.

Sanders continued: “In my view, Democrats will not retain the White House, will not regain the Senate, will not gain the House and will not be successful in dozens

of governor’s races unless we run a campaign which generates excitement and momentum and which produces a huge voter turnout. With all due respect, and I do not mean to insult anyone here, that will not happen with politics as usual. The same old, same old will not be successful.”

Referring to the growth of economic inequality, he declared, “We need a political movement which is prepared to take on the billionaire class and create a government which represents all Americans, and not just corporate America and wealthy campaign donors. In other words, we need a movement which takes on the economic and political establishment, not one which is part of it.”

Given that Sanders was addressing an audience consisting entirely of the political establishment, or at least its Democratic half, political operatives beholden to and controlled by “corporate America and wealthy campaign donors,” his appeal might seem peculiarly misdirected.

Sanders was not, however, suggesting an actual change in course by the Democratic Party. He was merely proposing that the Democrats adopt a different kind of political packaging to better conceal the right-wing character of this corrupt, pro-corporate organization, and he offered himself as the packager-in-chief. How else to interpret his suggestion that the Democratic Party embrace a “political revolution” against a political establishment of which it is a core institution?

Sanders’ concern about the declining support for the Democratic Party is not motivated solely by worries over its electoral prospects in 2016. The enormous pent-up anger among workers and young people threatens to develop independently of and in opposition to the entire political establishment and the capitalist system that it

defends. Sanders and his supporters among the organizations that orbit around the Democratic Party are seeking to prevent this from taking place.

The completely phony character of Sanders's populist rhetoric was underscored by his appearance Sunday on the ABC News interview program "This Week." He was asked by host Martha Raddatz about his silence on issues of foreign policy and national security, for which he had only the lame explanation that his campaign has only been up and running for three and a half months.

Raddatz noted that Sanders had voted against the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the 2002 Iraq war resolution, but for the 2001 resolution after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which the Bush administration used as authorization for the US attack on Afghanistan. She then asked him, "Is that only when we're attacked?"

Sanders answered, "No, not at all. You know, I think using our military is an option, obviously, that we will always have under certain circumstances, but it is the last option."

He added that in the case of the war with Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, "the United States cannot do it alone. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has the third largest military budget in the entire world. They're going to have to get in and take on ISIS as well as other countries in that region. The United States should be supportive. We should be working with other countries. But the United States cannot always be the only country involved in these wars."

In other words, the civil war that is destroying Iraq and Syria should be expanded through the involvement of other Arab countries, especially the ultra-reactionary Saudi monarchy, whose medieval policies include the persecution of religious minorities, frequent public beheadings of individuals judged to have violated Islamic law, and complete suppression of democratic rights.

Raddatz then asked Sanders whether Iran or Russia might take his record as indicating a reluctance to use force. The candidate replied, "Well, I think they would be making a very, very big mistake. I believe that the United States should have the strongest military in the world."

He went on, in response to a further question about the use of drone-fired missiles, to say, "You can argue that there are times and places where drone attacks

have been effective, there are times and places where they have been absolutely counter-effective and have caused more problems than they have solved. When you kill innocent people, what the end result is that people in the region become anti-American who otherwise would not have been. So, I think we have to use drones very, very selectively and effectively."

These remarks are the most extensive comments that Sanders has made on the military operations of American imperialism since he launched his campaign to become its "commander-in-chief." The Democratic candidate was seeking to reassure the military-intelligence apparatus that a President Sanders would be just as much its puppet as Barack Obama. ABC News was in no doubt about the significance of the interview, headlining its report, "Sanders Says He Would Be Prepared to Use Military Force."

This clear declaration of loyalty to American imperialism and its machinery of endless warfare makes nonsense of all Sanders's populist rhetoric about taking on Wall Street and the billionaire class. His declaration of support for the interests of the American ruling class abroad is at the same time a declaration of support for its policies within the United States.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact