

Socialist Alternative forms group to support Sanders campaign

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On December 19, Socialist Alternative announced that it had established a new political formation aimed at boosting the campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.

Dubbed the “Movement4Bernie,” the group is the most explicit connection between the Democratic Party and the American pseudo-left to date. But even the term “connection” implies that Socialist Alternative and the Democratic Party are separate entities. By actively mobilizing support for a nationalist, pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist bourgeois politician like Sanders, Socialist Alternative has again proven that it is a faction of the Democratic Party and the political establishment.

In announcing its formation, the Movement4Bernie issued a manifesto, which reads, in part: “Let’s get organized to help Bernie win in 2016, stop the right-wing Republicans and counter the Wall Street dominated Democratic Party establishment.

“Millions of people are fed up with establishment politics. The momentum behind Bernie Sanders gives us a real chance to gather together everyone who wants to build a real alternative for the 99%. We can turn this into the most important election in decades by building an organized political force behind the Sanders campaign to fight against racism, sexism and corporate domination. To do this, we need a political movement that can build protests and direct action while running independent candidates who refuse to take corporate cash.”

It continues: “If we get organized in a big way, we can bring millions behind us into Bernie’s campaign to win in 2016. We can begin to build a new, lasting, and powerful force—based on the independent power of working people and not big business...”

While supporting a bourgeois candidate running for a bourgeois party’s nomination to become the commander-in-chief of the armies of American imperialism, the group’s self-proclaimed “independence” from the two parties is an insult to the reader’s intelligence. Every line of this proclamation is a carefully crafted lie aimed at deceiving the

“millions” whom the authors hope to “bring behind” them into the Democratic Party.

Seattle’s City Councilperson and Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant announced her support for Movement4Bernie with a statement titled “Fight back against the pro-business Democratic establishment—Let’s build a #Movement4Bernie.”

As further proof of the degree to which Socialist Alternative operates as a faction within the Democratic Party, Sawant’s announcement takes as a starting point an internal Democratic Party campaign squabble over access to a voter database. When Sanders staffers apparently took advantage of a fortuitous glitch to steal Clinton voter information, the Democratic Party cut Sanders’ access and restored it shortly thereafter.

“Thursday’s attempt by the Democratic National Committee to sabotage Bernie Sanders’s campaign shows how the leadership of the Democratic Party is absolutely hostile to anti-corporate and left-wing politics,” Sawant writes.

“It will only be possible for Bernie to defeat Clinton—and the billionaires, the political establishment, and the corporate media that are supporting her—if Sander’s [sic] campaign activates tens of thousands of people as part of a massive movement against big business and the right...together we can stop the right-wing Republicans, Clinton and all big business politicians!”

The terms are carefully crafted in vague and malleable terms (“build a real alternative,” “build a new, lasting, and powerful force,” “fight against corporate domination,” “stop big business politicians”). While the Republicans are denounced as “right-wing” forces who must be “stopped,” it is only the “Democratic establishment” and not the party as a whole that needs, not to be stopped, but merely “countered.” Absent from these metaphysical labels is any class analysis—these terms only serve to confuse and disorient.

But in politics, parties and figures bear responsibility for the endorsements they make. An endorser announces that it

is willing to take political ownership for the endorsee's political program, which enunciates policies aimed at advancing the material interests of definite social classes. In other words, you are what you endorse.

A look at Sanders' program makes clear that Socialist Alternative is pronouncing its support for the American ruling class and the US imperialist war machine. During the Democratic debate last Saturday, Sanders once again affirmed his support for the never-ending US wars of plunder and destruction in the Middle East.

"I'm running for president because I want a new foreign policy—one that takes on ISIS, one that destroys ISIS," he said. Sanders, who voted for the war in Afghanistan, voted repeatedly to fund the war in Iraq, and supported Israel's genocidal war against the people of Gaza in 2014, also supports forcing Muslim countries to escalate the ongoing war in Syria: "I believe that countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar have got to step up to the plate, have got to contribute the money that we need, and the troops that we need, to destroy ISIS with American support."

Sanders has also proclaimed his support for deporting immigrant families, declaring that an open-borders policy would be "right-wing." Sanders trumpeted the tired, demagogic and nationalist attempt to pit American workers against the international working class by stating that immigration would "make everybody in America poorer."

Sanders has openly rejected the call for the working class to democratically control production and the distribution of resources—a basic tenet of socialism. To the contrary, his calls for a slightly higher minimum wage, free education and slightly higher taxes on the wealthy are reminiscent of a moderate Democratic platform from the 1960s.

Sanders also supports the Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia," the spending of trillions of dollars on the American war machine, and the prosecution of Edward Snowden.

Socialist Alternative's formation of the Movement4Bernie comes as Sanders' efforts to combine support for imperialist war abroad with social reform are being exposed as hopeless and impossible.

Though Sanders has made every effort to align himself with the military-intelligence apparatus, he is coming under pressure from sections of the ruling class who oppose any mention of social inequality on the grounds that it might detract from the so-called "war on terror." Using the pretext of the recent attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen wrote that Sanders "has had his day. Suddenly, big banks are the least of our problems."

The *New York Times* added that Sanders makes "fighting terrorism sound like an afterthought." His "progressive political message, so popular with liberals for much of 2015,

now seems lost in a fog of fear."

In other words, the needs of the imperialist war machine black out all discussion of social reform. The cynical statements of the Democratic press, and the right-wing trajectory of Sanders himself, expose the impossibility of fighting for social equality within the framework of the Sanders campaign, the Democratic Party and the capitalist system.

It is at precisely this moment that Socialist Alternative, which has long supported Sanders, launches an official campaign to cover over Sanders' pro-war, pro-capitalist program with a "left" fig leaf. This maneuver is aimed to confuse and disorient. It exposes the fact that Socialist Alternative serves to prop up the political establishment, prolong the existence of the capitalist system and ensure the continuity of the state of permanent war.

This maneuver is not the product of mistakes or political misjudgments. Groups like Socialist Alternative represent a privileged section of the upper-middle class that has nothing in common with socialism or the working class. They are paid for their services with additional "political space" within the political establishment, allowing them to advance their identity politics program and stake out positions of personal privilege in government, academia, the trade unions and the military-intelligence apparatus.

Certain disagreements exist between the various factions of the pseudo-left. For example, while Socialist Alternative runs head first into the Sanders campaign, the International Socialist Organization seeks to use its influence in the trade unions as a springboard for propping up bourgeois rule in the city of Chicago.

However, in the final analysis, the efforts of the pseudo-left to block a movement of the working class are becoming an increasingly important axis upon which the fate of capitalism relies. Fearing a revolutionary wave, the ruling class is preparing its political levees. It is in ruthless opposition to such pseudo-socialist groups that a revolutionary movement of the working class will be built.



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