

Trump and the Democratic Party

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With Hillary Clinton extending her lead over Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders to more than 300 delegates, the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination is nearing its conclusion. Either before the convention or at it, Sanders will likely concede the nomination and urge his supporters to back the former secretary of state, as he has said he would do from the beginning of his campaign.

With Clinton, the multi-millionaire friend of Wall Street, the Democratic Party will run in the fall campaign as the party of the status quo, its candidate a longtime fixture of the state with close ties to the military-intelligence apparatus. Clinton will present herself as the continuator of the policies of the Obama administration, essentially conceding the economically discontented to billionaire demagogue Donald Trump, who holds a wide lead in the contest for the Republican nomination.

Supporters of the Democratic Party are preparing for the next stage by laying the groundwork for an “anybody but Trump” campaign. Their aim is to obscure the Democratic Party’s role in creating the social conditions that Trump is seeking to exploit.

The status quo character of the Democratic Party was summed up by President Obama himself in his reaction to the March job figures released by the US Department of Labor. “The facts don’t lie,” he crowed. “America is pretty darn great right now.” Obama was referring sarcastically, of course, to the slogan of the Trump campaign, “Make America great again.”

The “great” America Obama boasts of, however, is one of deepening social crisis. The real unemployment rate remains in double-digits, once discouraged workers and involuntary part-timers are included. Real wages for non-supervisory workers have stagnated for decades. Poverty, food stamp usage, homelessness and other indices of social misery are high and rising. Social services like education and health care are

deteriorating, the physical infrastructure is collapsing and there is a frontal assault on pensions and other social benefits.

Trump’s ability to win a broader base of support is generally presented by supporters of the Democratic Party in the media as a consequence of the irretrievable racism of white workers. When the underlying social crisis is acknowledged, it is aimed at covering up for the Democratic Party and the Obama administration.

Typical is the comment last week by Paul Krugman, a longtime defender of the Obama administration. Krugman argues against those anti-Trump Republicans who claim that there is no social basis for the anger among white workers. He points to recent reports documenting the sharp rise of mortality and other signs of distress among middle-aged white Americans. “[T]he Republican elite can’t handle the truth,” Krugman writes. “It’s too committed to an Ayn Rand story line about heroic job creators versus moochers to admit either that trickle-down economics can fail to deliver good jobs, or that sometimes government aid is a crucial lifeline.”

Notably absent in Krugman’s analysis is any mention of the role of the Democratic Party in creating the social catastrophe facing the entire working class, of all races. Regions where Trump has been able to win support are those that have been devastated by decades of deindustrialization, overseen by both Democrats and Republicans, aided and abetted by the trade unions.

Obama, the candidate of “hope and change,” bailed out Wall Street at the expense of American workers, extended the wars and attacks on democratic rights of the Bush administration, and presided over continued deterioration of the conditions of life for the vast majority of working people.

Krugman also fails to note the widespread support among white workers for Sanders, a self-described “democratic socialist” who initially focused his

campaign on the enormous growth of social inequality and the dangers to democracy posed by the domination of American society by the “billionaire class.”

For all the media fixation on Trump, including its incessant claims that he has become the voice of “working-class whites” in this election, more white workers have voted for Sanders than for Trump, at least in the swath of northern states where Sanders has been most competitive with Clinton. Sanders has won more votes than Trump, in many cases substantially more votes, in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Vermont.

This support for Sanders among white workers is ignored because it does not conform to the political nature of the Democratic Party, which has attempted to forge an alliance between the top 1 percent and sections of the middle class through various forms of identity politics.

Sanders’ essential role has been to prevent the growing anti-capitalist sentiment from breaking free of the political straitjacket of the Democratic Party.

The anti-Trump campaign of the Democrats and their supporters among the pseudo-left will be tailored to this same aim: blocking an independent, socialist political movement of the working class, which is the only basis upon which the danger posed by Trump can be successfully combated. Their “anybody but Trump” boils down, in its essence, to “anything but socialism.”



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