

Sanders campaigns in Syracuse, New York

Steve Filips
13 April 2016

The Syracuse, New York area was host to Democratic Party presidential candidate Bernie Sanders on Tuesday afternoon. The Onondaga County Civic Center was crowded with students and workers who filled the building to capacity.

Sanders addressed a “Future to Believe In” rally in Buffalo on Monday. All 8,500 seats were filled at the Alumni Arena of the University of Buffalo, and thousands more were turned away, according to press reports.

It has been decades since New York has played a significant role in the outcome of the nominating process of either of the major capitalist parties. Hillary Clinton maintains a lead of several hundred delegates over Sanders, and also benefits from the role of hundreds of unelected “superdelegates,” almost all of whom have pledged to support her at the convention in July. Sanders has won 7 of the last 8 contests, however. While the media continues to portray Clinton as having the nomination all but locked up, some of Sanders’ supporters predict an upset next Tuesday.

A Monmouth poll of likely voters in New York’s Democratic primary shows Clinton with a 12 percentage point lead. Sanders has cut Clinton’s New York State poll advantage roughly in half in recent weeks. Another poll reported that if Clinton were to win the nomination, 30 percent of Sanders’ supporters would not vote for her in the general election.

In his speech in Syracuse, Sanders steered clear of such issues as the refugee crisis and especially the threat of war. He continued to emphasize his nationalist opposition to trade agreements, pitting US workers against their counterparts around the world. He focused on campaign finance reform and repeated his attack on Clinton’s reliance on fundraising from Political Action Committees and the super-rich, as well as her record of massive speaking fees from Wall Street sources.

The silence on the growing war danger is particularly

ominous, considering the history of previous presidential campaigns in which exclusion of anti-war sentiment from the election is followed by major military operations soon after the vote.

Sanders also stressed his support for the anti-working class trade unions and their alliance with the Democratic Party. After meeting with officials from the Communication Workers of America (CWA), Sanders said, “We are going to grow the trade union movement in this country.”

Sanders heads to the Hudson Valley city of Poughkeepsie on Wednesday, before a major rally in New York City’s Washington Square Park in the evening.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with many students and young workers at the Syracuse rally. Their comments reflected the sentiments of many Sanders supporters, who are motivated by opposition to social inequality. Sanders role is to try to keep this growing social anger within the confines of the Democratic Party.

Mark is a part-time worker from Syracuse. “I only recently found out about Sanders and liked his message to raise the minimum wage and his stance on climate change,” he said. Mark disagreed with growing inequality and said, “I’m in favor of wealth redistribution.”

Kiara, who is a student at Syracuse Academy of Science, a charter school, said, “I think it’s terrible there’s a class of people that works hard and has very little, while there is another class that barely works and has everything. Everyone has a right to a good education and health care.”

When asked about her thoughts on Clinton, Kiara said, “I wanted to get involved because of her; she’s wealthy and doesn’t have our interests in mind.”

WSWS reporters spoke with John and Sarah, recent graduates from the State University of New York

(SUNY) Oswego. They both agreed they would not vote for Clinton despite the expected endorsement by Sanders if she wins the nomination. John added, “I think [inequality] is one of our biggest problems. In today’s generation the future outlook is grim. In the past my parents could work and pay their way through school and not have student debts.” Asked about capitalism, both John and Sarah said they were dissatisfied. “I have been considering the alternative of socialism,” said John.

The WSWs spoke with Jake, a Syracuse University senior, who said of wider US military interventions, “It’s a difficult situation and there is no right answer.” He added that the Syrian refugee crisis “is a disaster that we have to solve. We need to help more and find some way to stop the killing.” The WSWs pointed out that Sanders would continue the same policies of Obama, including drone warfare, to which John replied, “I support Sanders and believe that he is the person that will get us out of the wars and intervene less.”

The WSWs asked Star and Shayla what they felt were the major issues facing students. They go to SUNY Potsdam and Lemoyne College, respectively, and raised the issue of social inequality. “Everyone is entitled to a quality education unburdened by debt,” Star said.

Star and Shayla were surprised, and expressed disagreement, when the WSWs pointed out that although Sanders called for free public college education, his plan offers lower interest rates on education loans and not forgiveness of past student debts.

Asked about Obama and the Democrats, Shayla said, “They are not really good choices for ordinary people. The two-party system has very little to offer.”

Star said, “I don’t like Clinton, but if it was choice between her and Trump I would break down and vote for her. That’s the thing about the two-party system; you’re stuck between a rock and a hard place and forced to make a choice you don’t want to make!”



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact