

Democratic Party establishment witch-hunts Sanders' supporters

Patrick Martin
19 May 2016

In the wake of Hillary Clinton's two worst showings in closed Democratic primaries—a hair's breadth victory in Kentucky and a rout at the hands of Bernie Sanders in Oregon—the Democratic Party establishment and the corporate media have launched a vicious provocation against the Sanders campaign, based on claims that Sanders supporters have threatened violence against party officials in Nevada.

The Nevada state Democratic convention in Las Vegas last Saturday ended in chaos after state chairwoman Roberta Lange gaveled through a rigged credentials report that excluded just enough Sanders supporters to ensure a narrow Clinton majority and two additional Clinton delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. When Sanders supporters began to stand up and voice their objections, Lange declared the convention adjourned and summoned sheriff's deputies to enforce her decision.

Over the next few days, Lange claims to have received more than a thousand email and voicemail messages from all across the country, denouncing her actions in scathing terms. Such messages are predictable expressions of outrage over the typically bureaucratic, bullying methods of the Democratic Party machine. But a media firestorm has erupted over a handful of messages that were abusive in tone or allegedly threatened violence. There is not a shred of evidence that such messages were instigated by the Sanders campaign. They are just as likely to be the work of provocateurs seeking to aid the Clinton campaign or the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Since the weekend, however, top Democratic Party officials and the media have stepped up their denunciations of the alleged violence and sexism of Sanders supporters, while downplaying or ignoring the

vote-rigging by the Clinton camp and the police mobilization to protect Democratic Party officials from an angry rank-and-file.

The Nevada state Democratic Party sent a letter to the Democratic National Committee Monday, lodging a formal complaint against the Sanders campaign, for “failing to adequately denounce the threats of violence of his supporters.” It warned that “the tactics and behavior on display here in Nevada are harbingers of things to come as Democrats gather in Philadelphia.” In language that reeks of McCarthy-style witch-hunting, the state party declared, “Part of the approach by the Sanders campaign was to employ these easily-incensed delegates as shock troops.” While “inciting disruption—and, yes, violence,” the state party continued, “the goal of many of these individuals, sanctioned or encouraged by the Sanders campaign, is not party-building but something more sinister.”

When Sanders sent a letter disavowing any violence or threats of violence, but reiterating the complaints of his supporters over the rigging of the Nevada state convention, DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz gave a round of media interviews Tuesday criticizing his response as “anything but acceptable.” Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, the boss of the Nevada Democratic Party, called Sanders to complain and denounced his “silly statement.”

Some Democratic Party leaders and media commentators even sought to equate the conduct of Sanders supporters in Nevada with the thuggery at Trump rallies. Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois said, “We saw what happened at the Trump rallies, which broke into violence, people punching one another. I don't want to see that happen at the Democratic Party.”

In an editorial Wednesday, the *Los Angeles*

Times—which is backing Clinton in the critical California primary June 7—wrote, “Donald Trump isn’t the only presidential candidate playing with fire and recklessly courting an angry mob. For the latest round of curse-word hurling, chair throwing, social-media stalking and conspiracy-theory swapping, look no further than the supporters of Bernie Sanders.”

The uproar over the Nevada state convention is an entirely manufactured political provocation. It shows both the desperation of the Clinton campaign, which has seen Sanders disrupt the expected coronation of the Democratic frontrunner, and the hostility of the corporate-controlled media to the left-wing sentiments animating millions of young people and working people who have flocked to the campaign of the self-professed “democratic socialist.”

It is grotesque and disgusting to see media pundits like Wolf Blitzer, a publicist and cheerleader for every American war of the past quarter-century, an enthusiast for drone-missile assassinations, complaining about a few chairs being thrown in a Las Vegas casino ballroom.

The Clinton campaign is anxious to be rid of the Sanders challenge so that the Democratic frontrunner can abandon any pretense of economic populism and settle into her general election posture as the candidate of the Wall Street establishment and the military-intelligence apparatus, denouncing Trump as a “loose cannon” compared to Clinton’s proven record as a warmonger and defender of American imperialism.

Lost in all of this is any discussion of the real policies of Clinton and the Democratic Party as a whole, which are thoroughly right-wing and pro-corporate. Clinton is running as the continuator of the Obama administration, which has overseen the greatest transfer of wealth from working people to the financial aristocracy in US history. Sanders likewise makes no criticism of Obama’s record, demonstrating that his own program has nothing in common with genuine socialism.

In his speech Tuesday night in Carson, California, Sanders struck a left posture for the final three weeks of the primary campaign, declaring, “I come from the working class of this country, and I will be damned if we will allow the Republican Party, whose job is to represent the rich and the powerful, to win the votes of working-class Americans.”

And yet Sanders’ own aim throughout his campaign has been to channel growing anti-capitalist sentiment behind Democrats, which, no less than the Republicans, are a party of the “rich and powerful.” The notion that his campaign is going to transform the Democratic Party into a representative of the working class is exposed by the reaction of the Democratic establishment to the events in Nevada.

The Democratic Party is not an association of political virgins and pacifists, but the second-oldest capitalist party on the planet, steeped in blood from its origins as the party of the Southern slaveowners. It is the party of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There is not a major Democratic Party city leader, governor or senator who is not well practiced in the dark arts of bourgeois politics, all the way up to the highest levels of the state. The party is headed by a president who engages in daily assassinations around the world. The candidate whose supporters are bleating about Sanders’s alleged violence, Hillary Clinton, is notorious for her cackling obituary of Muammar Gaddafi: “We came, we saw, he died.” Barbara Boxer and Harry Reid did not object to that celebration of NATO bombs and Islamist lynch mobs.

Millions of people are getting an experience in the reality of capitalist politics. The Democratic and Republican parties have a long history as the political instruments of the capitalist class, and this class divide cannot be bridged. If the Democrats react so hostilely to a candidate who has worked with them loyally for decades, how will they respond to a political movement that really challenges them from the outside?

The historical challenge facing the American working class is to break free of the entire two-party political structure and organize an independent mass political movement of the working class, based on a socialist program.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact