Sanders softens criticism of Clinton at Los Angeles-area rallies

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25 May 2016

Continuing his series of campaign stops throughout California in advance of the state's June 7th primary election, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders recently spoke at several locations throughout Los Angeles County. Rallies were held in the East Los Angeles area of Lincoln Park on Monday morning and the coastal city of Santa Monica on Monday afternoon. On Tuesday, Sanders held similar events in the nearby cities of Riverside, San Bernardino and Anaheim.

Between 6,000 and 8,000 people attended the Lincoln Park and Santa Monica rallies, primarily younger voters who have heavily backed Sanders over his rival, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Several celebrities also addressed the crowd at the Los Angeles rallies, including actress Rosario Dawson and Dick van Dyke, now 90 years old.

Clinton has a significant lead in the delegate vote, despite a recent string of primary victories by Sanders and an extremely narrow loss to Clinton in the state of Kentucky.

In an interview with CNN last week Clinton declared the Democratic nomination contest all but over. "I will be the nominee for my party," she said. Her campaign also announced that it has declined a Fox News debate scheduled with Senator Sanders in advance of the primary to focus instead on the general election campaign against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Sanders used the Los Angeles rallies to criticize Clinton's cancellation, calling it "a little insulting to the people of California—the largest state" He then argued however, that Clinton, "is not prepared to have a discussion with me about how she is going to help California address the major crises we face," all but explicitly acknowledging that Clinton would be the nominee.

While Sanders has vowed to continue his campaign until the Democratic Party convention this July, as the Democratic nomination process begins to draw to a close he is seeking to prepare his supporters for an eventual endorsement of Clinton.

Gone at the rallies in Santa Monica and Lincoln Heights were denunciations of Clinton's $250,000 speaking fees, her Wall Street ties and her authorization vote for the war in Iraq. Sanders turned his attention instead to immigration issues, both to appeal to the large Latino community in Los Angeles and to begin coordinating fire with Clinton against the Trump campaign.

Reporters from the WSWS spoke with Sanders supporters at the Santa Monica rally on Monday.

Robin Sabnis, 36, is a software tester from the nearby community of Culver City. "I like Bernie," he said. "I think he has a lot of good ideas such as breaking up the banks."

When the WSWS reporter explained the difference between the socialist program of expropriating the banks and Sanders call to make banks somewhat smaller, Sabnis said, "It does seem like the capitalists would still benefit," he said.

Sambis went on to describe Sanders as a New Deal Democrat like Roosevelt who wants to reform capitalism. When probed by the reporter, Rohan acknowledged that capitalism has to be replaced and not reformed.

Carl Lawson is a retiree who traveled more than an hour from the city of Claremont to attend the Sanders rally. Prior to retirement, Lawson was an advance man (location planner) for the Democratic Party and worked on the presidential campaigns of Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern and Jimmy Carter and was a member of the Democratic National Committee for

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several years.

He said that Sanders was the only candidate that could beat Trump. He also relayed a conversation he had with a group of young “millennials” while taking the train over to the rally.

The young people he said had come to the “realization that they had been left with the short end of the stick.” Sanders was the first political candidate they had come across who addressed their grievances, particularly in relation to paying for college, getting jobs and other economic problems. “To these young people, ” he elaborated, “the system is rigged so they never had a chance. The system is rigged with student loans, and the corporations and government are in bed with everybody. ”

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