

Sanders' "political revolution" revealed: Nationalist reaction and support for Clinton

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The response of Bernie Sanders to the Brexit vote has exposed the fraud of his "political revolution." As part of his transition to openly endorsing the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, Sanders published a commentary in the *New York Times* Wednesday urging Clinton and the Democrats to adopt the economic nationalist program of their Republican opponent, Donald Trump.

Titling his column "Democrats Have to Wake Up," Sanders warns of the danger of the fascistic billionaire winning the White House in November by exploiting the same anger among American workers over plunging living standards and rising social inequality that resulted in the British vote to leave the European Union. His answer is to adopt the policy of protectionism and trade war of the right-wing leadership of the leave camp in the UK and Trump in the US.

Echoing a speech delivered by Trump the previous day in the economically devastated former steel town of Monessen, Pennsylvania, Sanders blames the collapse of American workers' living standards and growth of social inequality on globalization and trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and Obama's proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership.

He writes, "Millions of American voters, like the Leave supporters, are understandably angry and frustrated by the economic forces that are destroying the middle class." He declares, "We need to fundamentally reject our 'free trade' policies and move to fair trade. Americans should not have to compete against workers in low-wage countries who earn pennies an hour. We must defeat the Trans-Pacific Partnership."

It is true that economic globalization has been used by the corporate-financial elites in the US and around

the world to attack the working class and destroy its living standards. The trade deals worked out by the capitalists and their governments have been used to destroy jobs and drive down wages.

But insofar as these policies are presented by both Trump and Sanders apart from the class interests they represent and the capitalist system that is their source, such denunciations are demagogic and directed toward the most reactionary ends.

Sanders won support from workers and particularly from youth by presenting himself as a socialist, denouncing the "billionaire class" and calling for a "political revolution" to end the domination of Wall Street and reverse the growth of social inequality. But in his *New York Times* column, two words that do not appear are "capitalism" and "socialism."

There is opposition to reactionary capitalist trade deals from the left—on the basis of genuine socialism and the struggle to unite the working class across all national borders—and from the right—on the basis of nationalism, militarism and xenophobia. The opposition of both Trump and Sanders is from the right, even though Sanders attempts dress up his protectionist prescriptions with left-sounding rhetoric.

In his speech in Monessen, Trump at one point indicated the pro-corporate reality behind his posture of concern for the plight of workers. "We will make America the best place in the world to start a business, hire workers, and open a factory," he declared. "This includes massive tax reform to lift the crushing burdens on American workers and businesses. We will also get rid of wasteful rules and regulations which are destroying our job creation capacity..."

In other words, his "America First" program means the removal of whatever remains of corporate taxes and restrictions on the capitalists' ability to exploit the

working class.

It also means the intensification of the confrontation with China, Russia and other rivals of American imperialism; the escalation of the drive toward world war; the adoption of torture as a legitimate policy; and a massive buildup of the repressive powers of the state. These policies are openly proclaimed by Trump, but they follow as well from the nationalism promoted by Sanders.

They are the policies of the most reactionary sections of the ruling class in the face of mounting economic crisis, proliferating geo-political conflicts and a resurgence of working class struggle.

Those who have followed Sanders' political career will know that his economic nationalism is nothing new, and that he himself has defended it on the basis of attacks on immigrant and foreign workers. Last July, two months after he announced his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, Sanders gave an interview with the Vox web site in which he denounced a policy of "open borders"—a basic tenet of genuine socialism, which upholds the right of workers to live and work wherever they choose with full citizenship rights—as a right-wing proposal that “would make everybody in America poorer.”

He continued: “You’re doing away with the concept of a nation state... Bring in all kinds of people, work for \$2 or \$3 an hour... You think we should open the borders and bring in a lot of low-wage workers, or do you think maybe we should try to get jobs for those [American] kids?”

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party warned at the very outset of the Sanders campaign that its purpose was to channel opposition to the political establishment behind the Democratic Party.

The outcome of Sanders' “political revolution” is not only his own total integration into the Democratic Party, but his emergence as spokesman for its most nationalist wing. As he justifies his support for Clinton as necessary to stop Trump, Sanders adopts Trump's economic program.

Those who believed Sanders' claims to be a socialist and were lured on that basis into supporting his campaign are getting a serious lesson in politics. The consequences of the subordination of social opposition in the working class and among young people to the

Sanders campaign are being revealed.

The answer to the relentless assault on the living standards of the working class is not economic autarky and the strengthening of national borders, but the revolutionary struggle to place the corporations and banks under the democratic control of the working class, and the unification of workers across all national lines in opposition to all of the capitalists and all of their governments.

This is the program advanced in the US elections by the Socialist Equality Party and its candidates for president and vice president, Jerry White and Niles Niemuth. This is where those who want to fight for a socialist future must turn.



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