

Obama campaigns with Hillary Clinton at North Carolina rally

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6 July 2016

President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party's presumptive presidential nominee, made a joint appearance at a campaign rally in Charlotte, North Carolina yesterday afternoon. It was the first such appearance by Obama since his endorsement of Clinton at the beginning of last month. Clinton gave a perfunctory 15-minute speech before handing over the microphone to Obama, who spoke for nearly an hour.

The main thrust of both speeches was to appeal to those who voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012, particularly minority workers, and rally them behind the Clinton campaign, by presenting the election of Hillary Clinton as a continuation of the Obama administration. Both speakers gave an absurd, upside-down portrayal of American society under Obama, fortified with a heavy dose of populist rhetoric, which bears no relationship to reality.

"I don't think [Obama] gets the credit he deserves for saving our economy [after the 2008 financial crisis]," Clinton said. "We've added 14 million private sector jobs. The auto industry just had its best year ever, 20 million people now have health care ... So our next president has a different job to do: building on the progress that President Obama has made."

"Look, when I came into office things were not in very good shape, you will recall," Obama said. "We were losing 800,000 jobs a month, pursuing, by the way, the same proposals that Republicans are still peddling. And over the past six years our businesses have created more than 14 million new jobs, cut the unemployment rate in half, manufacturing jobs have grown for the first time since another President Clinton was in office."

In reality, the Obama administration responded to the 2008 financial crisis with the greatest transfer of wealth

from the poor to the rich in American history. One Harvard study found that 95 percent of all income gains between 2009 and 2012 went to the wealthiest 1 percent of American society. Backed from the beginning by Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, the Obama administration personifies the domination of the banks and the super-rich over every aspect of American life.

The living conditions for the vast majority have deteriorated under Obama, as the direct and intended result of the policies pursued by the administration. For example, Clinton neglected to inform her listeners that the record profits in the American auto industry are due to massive wage and benefit reductions enforced by the Obama administration's restructuring of the industry in 2009, including cutting wages in half for new hires. Living standards have been literally thrown back a century, with new hires at Ford earning less in real terms than their great-grandfathers in 1914.

To the extent that employment figures have recovered, this is largely due to the prevalence after the recession of low wage and part-time jobs, which has been described as the "new normal" for the indefinite future. Meanwhile, millions of workers have responded to discouraging job prospects by dropping out of the workforce altogether, producing a labor force participation rate that is among the lowest on record.

And as far the health care is concerned, the Affordable Care Act (otherwise known as Obamacare) was a pro-corporate piece of legislation designed from the beginning to force workers off their employer-sponsored health care plans, the most common means through which Americans receive health care, and onto substandard plans on insurance "exchanges."

Despite the faux-populism which characterized the speeches, what was most noteworthy was the near-

complete absence of any appeal to the popular anger over deteriorating social conditions which found expression in the unexpected successes of the campaigns of the self-described “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders and the right-wing billionaire demagogue Donald Trump.

Outside of a few perfunctory remarks about college tuition and a pledge to raise the minimum wage by an unspecified amount, they made no proposals to address the social distress facing tens of millions of Americans. Rebuffing Republican candidate Donald Trump’s slogan “make America great again,” which he has used to channel social distress behind his right-wing campaign, Obama reiterated his complacent declaration that “America is really great” right now.

Both speakers sought to palm off the administration’s attacks on the working class as “progressive” and promised more of the same if Clinton is elected. This is a further indication that Clinton is jettisoning the issues of poverty and social inequality, now that Sanders’ campaign has been dispatched with. Instead, she is planning to run her campaign in the general election on the basis of an appeal to sections of the military-intelligence apparatus and the Republican Party who are opposed to Trump’s candidacy.

Significantly, Obama declared that the November election “isn’t even really a choice between left and right or Democrat and Republican ... [but] whether we are going to cling to some imaginary past or whether we’re going to reach for the future.”

With regards to the real axis of Clinton’s general election campaign, the most important and revealing moment came when Obama, a half hour into his speech, finally turned his attention to foreign policy. Reiterating Clinton’s declaration that Trump is “unqualified and temperamentally unfit” to serve as the country’s commander in chief, Obama touted Clinton’s experience as secretary of state, where she played a leading role in the crimes of American imperialism.

Specifically singling out Clinton’s role in the planning of the assassination of Osama bin Laden, Obama declared that Clinton “understands that we can’t retreat from a world that needs American leadership. That’s why she offers a smarter approach that uses every element of American power.” This is an appeal to the military-intelligence apparatus against

Trump’s occasional flirtations with isolationism and the erratic character of his foreign policy declarations overall.

Obama continued: “She’ll deploy diplomacy whenever possible, but she also knows what it takes to be a commander in chief, and I know she will never hesitate to use force when it is necessary.” Given the enormous escalation of American militarism under Obama, who has backed devastating civil wars in the Middle East and has brought the United States to the brink of war with Russia and China, this endorsement should be taken as a serious warning.

Obama finally closed his remarks by declaring, “I have run my last campaign, and I couldn’t be prouder of the things we’ve done together, but I’m ready to pass the baton and I know that Hillary Clinton is going to take it.” There could hardly be a stronger indictment of Clinton as the personification of the corporate-controlled political establishment.



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