

Democratic platform deal sets stage for Sanders' endorsement of Clinton

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Bernie Sanders' expected endorsement of Hillary Clinton today at a joint event in Portsmouth, New Hampshire is the culmination of a weeks-long effort by the candidate, who calls himself a "democratic socialist," to convince supporters that his "political revolution" has shifted the Democratic Party and Clinton herself to the left.

The joint campaign appearance follows a weekend of political theatre in Orlando, Florida, where the Clinton-controlled Democratic Party platform committee agreed to a number of amendments to the party's 2016 platform proposed by the Sanders camp. The 35-page document, which will be finalized and ratified at the Democratic Party national convention in Philadelphia later this month, is nonbinding and of zero significance in terms of the policies of the next president.

It has been decades since the official platforms adopted by the two parties of American big business, the Democrats and Republicans, were seen by the parties themselves or the political and media establishment as a whole as anything more than window dressing. This year, however, Sanders has sought to portray the document and the convention itself as having great political import. He is doing so in furtherance of his effort to divert the popular disgust with the political system and desire for an anticapitalist alternative that was reflected in the broad support for his campaign back behind the Democratic Party and its right-wing candidate.

Having won more than 20 state primaries and caucuses and 13 million votes based on his denunciations of the economic and political domination of the "billionaire class," Sanders faces the difficult task of convincing his supporters to back a candidate who speaks for Wall Street and the Pentagon war machine.

"We have made enormous strides," Sanders said of the weekend platform committee meeting. "Thanks to the millions of people across the country who got involved in the political process—many for the first time—we now have the most progressive platform in the history of the Democratic Party."

This ridiculous claim was echoed by various news outlets, from *Fortune* ("How Bernie is Flexing his Muscles on the Democratic Party") and *Slate* ("The Democratic Platform Is a Monument to Bernie Sanders' Campaign") to NBC News ("Democrats Advance Most Progressive Platform in Party History").

Even if one assumed that the platform had some bearing on the actual policies to be pursued, one would look in vain for anything remotely hinting at socialism or even serious social reform. Even by the standards of Democratic platforms spanning the decades between the Great Depression and the 1960s, when the Democratic Party, under pressure from militant mass struggles of the working class, oversaw a series of social reforms, the document approved over the weekend is right-wing.

A Sanders-backed amendment, for example, calling for an increase in the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$15, itself a completely inadequate measure that would leave workers in poverty, is diluted and qualified by language stating that it "should" be implemented "over time."

Another Sanders proposal that was approved calls for the Department of Justice to investigate all shootings involving police officers. The Obama Justice Department has investigated a number of recent police killings of unarmed workers and youth and failed to indict a single killer cop. These token investigations are designed to contain popular anger over police violence and divert attention from the ongoing militarization of

police departments across the country.

On those issues where even a token statement would have actual political consequences, such as criticism of Israel's savage policy toward the Palestinians or opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, the platform committee squelched amendments from the Sanders camp and the Vermont senator quickly acquiesced.

A Sanders proposal to include a statement in the platform calling for an end to Israel's "occupation and illegal settlements" in Palestine was shot down by the Clinton-controlled committee. When Sanders supporters in the public galleries protested, the police were sent in to shut them up.

Even though such mild criticism of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land is standard fare for most European governments, the Democratic Party can brook no such gesture of disapproval. This in itself exposes the right-wing and militarist character of any administration headed by former secretary of state Clinton, who already has the blood of hundreds of thousands of victims of American imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Somalia on her hands.

Last March, Clinton delivered a bellicose speech to a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), where she pledged to increase military and economic aid to Israel and threatened war with Iran. She denounced Palestinian terror attacks on Israelis while defending Israeli invasions, bombings and targeted assassinations that have killed tens of thousands, including the 2014 invasion of Gaza. She equated criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism and backed efforts by Zionist organizations to ban anti-Israel protests on US college campuses.

A Sanders amendment to block the Trans-Pacific Partnership from coming up for a vote in Congress was similarly rejected. Even though Clinton has come out against TPP, in an effort, like Sanders, to divert social anger over plant closings down the path of economic nationalism, the trade pact enjoys the consensus support of the corporate and financial elite and the Obama administration, and is seen as a means of advancing Washington's economic and military offensive against China.

Sanders did not challenge other sections of the platform critical to the needs of American imperialism.

The document hailed by Sanders as the most progressive in the party's history states: "Democrats believe America must continue to have the strongest military in the world." It calls for an escalation of the wars in Iraq and Syria, the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and further provocations against Russia and China. It sanctions the Obama policy of perpetual warfare as well as increasing domestic spying and repression in the name of the "war on terror."

Sanders pointed to Clinton's adoption of two proposals following backroom negotiations between the two camps as evidence that his "political revolution" was working and Clinton was moving to the left. One was a call for people over 55 to be given the option of buying into Medicare. Another was support for the addition of a "public option" to Obamacare, and a third was a proposal to make public colleges and universities tuition-free for students from families with annual incomes up to \$125,000. These proposals, which would do nothing to halt the assault on working people's health care and little to make college more affordable for working-class youth, would have virtually no chance of being passed by Congress and implemented.

The final act of the platform committee meeting revealed the widespread hatred of Clinton among Sanders supporters and workers and youth more generally, and the difficulties both Sanders and Clinton face in convincing those who rallied behind the supposedly "socialist" senator to vote for the Democratic nominee. The two camps had agreed in advance on an amendment naming Clinton as the Democratic candidate, but when the proposal was announced, the resulting uproar among Sanders backers in the audience forced the platform committee to withdraw it.



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