

Democratic convention: Sanders caps off a day of deceit and demagoguery

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Bernie Sanders concluded his assigned task of seeking to corral mass anger and opposition in the working class behind the Democratic Party in the 2016 presidential election with a speech Monday night that capped off a day of political fraud and demagoguery.

Earlier in the day, Sanders was booed down when he told a meeting of his delegates and supporters outside the Philadelphia convention hall that they had to take forward his “political revolution” by voting for Hillary Clinton. In response to the eruption of anger and disgust from his own periphery, Sanders declared cynically, “This is a real world we live in.”

He, of course, had done all in his power to ensure that this “real world” excluded the emergence of an independent movement of the working class against the increasingly hated capitalist system, and remained politically strangled by the domination of two right-wing, militaristic parties of the American corporate-financial aristocracy.

Developments prior to the formal opening of the convention already underscored the reactionary character of the campaign Hillary Clinton plans to wage and of the government she will head if she wins the election in November. In response to the exposure, via leaked emails, of the plotting of her allies in the leadership of the Democratic National Committee to subvert the primary challenge from Sanders, Clinton’s aides charged, without providing any evidence, that Russia had masterminded the leak in order to place its supposed stooge, Donald Trump, in the White House.

This is part of an effort to outflank the fascistic Trump from the right by accusing him of being “soft” on Russian President Vladimir Putin and unwilling to attack Russia in defense of NATO allies on Russia’s western border, as well as being insufficiently aggressive in preparing for war against China.

The day also featured a fawning speech by Clinton to the national convention of the right-wing, pro-war Veterans of Foreign Wars, in which Clinton lavished praise on Republican war hawk John McCain. The day before, President Obama had made clear the Democrats’ orientation to disaffected Republicans by praising a long list of past Republican officeholders in an interview on the “Face the Nation” television program. He topped this off by putting Ronald Reagan in the ranks of “America’s greatest presidents.”

In the course of Monday’s proceedings inside Wells Fargo Center, one after another representative of the well-off middle class rose to praise Clinton as a tireless fighter in behalf of equality and justice. The various strands of identity politics were on full display, with African-American, Hispanic, women, gay and disabled speakers taking turns in praising this widely hated symbol of the political establishment, who is personally implicated in war crimes that have killed millions and notorious for her corrupt relations with Wall Street.

But it was left to Sanders to complete the job of turning reality on its head and presenting Clinton and the Democratic Party as fighters for the interests of the common people. His speech was a display of unalloyed cynicism and dishonesty. To hear him speak, one would never know why he had opposed Clinton in the first place.

To attempt to enumerate all of the obvious falsehoods and contradictions in his speech would consume dozens of pages. It is sufficient at this point to note that were his glowing statements about Clinton true, his own campaign would be incomprehensible, as would the broad support it received. The basis for the 13 million votes, about which he boasted in his remarks, was the passionate desire of masses of working people and youth for an alternative to the reactionary policies with

which Clinton has been associated for more than three decades.

Sanders' exercise in political fraud seemed to be premised on the assumption that the American people suffer from collective amnesia. But facts are facts. The last time the Clintons occupied the White House they presided over a period of unprecedented financial corruption.

The Bill Clinton administration was the period of "irrational exuberance," when super-low interest rates underwrote a 400 percent rise in the stock market. All of the Clintons' policies—the dismantling of Glass-Steagall and whatever else remained of banking regulations, the destruction of the federal welfare program—led to a vast enrichment of the corporate-financial elite. It was the period that produced Enron and the explosion in CEO pay. All of the processes that led to the financial collapse and depression of 2008 matured under the Clintons.

For all of Sanders' denunciations of Trump, the fact remains that the billionaire real estate mogul's political rise was possible only because of mass disillusionment and frustration with the Democratic Party's hypocrisy and right-wing policies.

One thing that was particularly striking about Sanders' speech was the absence of a single reference to foreign policy. He said not a word about Clinton's role as senator in backing the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq or her role as secretary of state in championing the savage bombing of Libya and murder of its ruler Muammar Gaddafi, as well as the horrific bloodletting in Syria in pursuit of regime change and the increasingly aggressive warmongering toward both China and Russia.

Sanders had the gall to present his full-throated backing for Clinton ("Hillary Clinton will make an outstanding president and I am proud to stand with her tonight") as the continuation of his "political revolution" against the "billionaire class." That so-called "revolution" turned out to consist of putting a Democrat back in the White House, accompanied by a Democratic House and Senate. Sanders was silent on the decision of the Clinton campaign to give the multibillionaire former Republican mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, a prime-time spot on Wednesday night to declare his own support for Clinton.

Not only Sanders, but all of the various middle-class organizations—the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative, Solidarity, and the Green Party—that promoted him are now politically responsible for the consequences.

The political lessons of the Sanders experience must be learned. As has happened so often before, the Democratic Party has become the graveyard of a movement of social protest, with Sanders serving as the undertaker. The warnings repeatedly issued by the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site*, which insisted that Sanders was not the representative of a movement of social revolt, but rather the instrument for containing and dissipating that movement, have been fully borne out.

The campaign of the Socialist Equality Party and its presidential and vice presidential candidates Jerry White and Niles Niemuth is the only campaign in this election that is genuinely independent of capitalist politics and advances a revolutionary socialist program.



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