

Bernie Sanders campaigns for Clinton at Ohio campuses

Tom Hall
19 September 2016

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders made two appearances at university campuses in Ohio, a key “swing state” in the presidential elections, on Saturday to stump for Hillary Clinton and seek to arrest her declining poll numbers among youth.

The former Clinton challenger for the Democratic presidential nomination spoke at the University of Akron and at Kent State University. His efforts were assisted by fellow “progressive” Democrat Elizabeth Warren, who spoke on Saturday at Ohio State University and Sunday at Cleveland State.

The embrace of the Hillary Clinton campaign, which Sanders has portrayed since the primaries as the continuation of the “political revolution” he claims to advocate, has provoked disgust and outrage among his former supporters. This was reflected in the poor attendance at both of his rallies, which collectively attracted about 800 people, according to press reports, in contrast to the thousands of people who routinely turned out to his rallies during the primaries.

Those who were attracted to Sanders because of his denunciations of social inequality and Wall Street criminality were obviously in no mood to see him shill for a candidate who personifies both the money-grubbing and the arrogance of the ruling class.

Clinton has seen her considerable post-convention lead in the polls over her Republican challenger Donald Trump all but evaporate over a month which she largely devoted to fundraising among her multi-millionaire supporters on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley, while making speeches touting her militaristic credentials as a potential “commander-in-chief.”

The general election campaign has seen Clinton repeatedly attempt to outflank Trump from the right, basing her appeal to sections of the military and the Republican Party opposed to Trump on the basis that he

is too “erratic” to be trusted to oversee an escalation of American militarism, directed above all against Russia.

Clinton’s support among young people has declined drastically. A national Quinnipiac poll found that Clinton’s lead over Trump among voters aged 18 to 34 has collapsed from 24 points to 5 points since early August. This decline has not been reflected in any rise in support for Trump, who remains extremely unpopular among young people.

Instead, much of this support has gone towards third-party candidates, such as the Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson or the Green Party’s Jill Stein. As much as one-third of people under 30 are planning to vote against the two main capitalist parties, according to the same Quinnipiac poll.

The collapse in Clinton’s support among younger voters has caused particular concern within her campaign, which dispatched Sanders and Warren to Ohio to appeal for support on college campuses, making the claim that Clinton will support a major program of debt relief for overburdened students. Clinton herself is to speak on that topic at Temple University in Philadelphia on Monday.

In the appearances by Sanders and Warren in Ohio, the two Democratic Party operatives used the threat of a Trump presidency as a cudgel to bludgeon young people into supporting Hillary Clinton. “We can’t in 2016 accept bigotry as the cornerstone of any campaign,” Sanders declared at Kent State. Warren denounced Trump as a racist and “a man with a dark and ugly soul.”

Sanders also attempted to use Clinton’s insincere pledge to enact tuition-free college education to convince debt-burdened and economically insecure college students to back her campaign. “When you talk to your friends and they say, ‘I’m not going to vote,

everybody's horrible,' ask them how much they're going to leave school in debt," Sanders said.

At a rally on Friday in New York, Sanders also denounced the growing support for third party candidates (although he postured for two decades as an "independent" in his campaigns for Congress and US Senate). "When we're talking about president of the United States, in my own personal view, this is not the time for a protest vote," Sanders said. "This is [the] time to elect Hillary Clinton and then work after the election to mobilize millions of people to make sure she can be the most progressive president she can be."

Unsurprisingly, attacks on social inequality were completely absent from the weekend's speeches. Both Sanders and Warren framed the Trump campaign, which has capitalized upon widespread economic distress in order to cultivate a far-right political movement, in entirely racial terms. "The root" of Trump's campaign is "bigotry," Sanders claimed during an interview Friday on CNN. This is in line with the Clinton campaign's attempts to deny the existence of the economic grievances which have found a right-wing expression in the Trump campaign.

Despite the focus in his public appearances on the danger of a Trump presidency, Sanders shares the concern of the whole US political establishment over the mounting popular opposition to the whole two-party system, which has found reflection in the massive unpopularity of both major candidates. From the beginning, his presidential campaign was aimed at using his populist and even "socialist" veneer to channel social and political opposition back behind the Democratic Party.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)