

Sanders begins nationwide tour to promote Democratic Party

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Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and the new Democratic National Committee chairman Tom Perez have “teamed up” for a cross-country tour in the Democratic Party’s latest effort to corral opposition to the Trump administration back into the safe channels of the two-party system.

The duo will hit several states by the end of the week, concentrating mainly on regions that went Republican in the 2016 election: Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska and Utah. Nevada will be the only stop that the Democrats won, while Maine had a split electoral vote. The tour, called “Come together and fight back,” is being promoted as an effort to “increase grassroots activism.”

The trip marks another stage in Sanders’ role as a representative of the Democratic Party aimed at blocking the emergence of any independent movement of the working class.

The speeches given by Sanders up to this point in the tour indicate a return of the more left-sounding slogans that brought him success in his primary campaign last year. Sanders is appealing to the crowds by acknowledging the very real and serious domestic issues affecting working-class families across the country. Throughout his nearly hour-long speeches, he rails against the “billionaire class,” mass incarceration, the destruction of the environment, the drug epidemic, failing infrastructure, the attack on health care, growing student debt, and more, without ever explaining the origins of these problems beyond a denunciation of Donald Trump.

The issues Sanders identifies were around long before Trump came to office. However, it is not surprising that Perez and Sanders say nothing about the track record of the Democratic Party.

In Tuesday’s appearance in Kentucky, Sanders noted

that for the first time since the AIDS epidemic, life expectancy in the US has gone down. He did not note that this has come on the heels of eight years of the Democratic Party’s health care “reform” plan, the Affordable Care Act. He denounced the “billionaire” class and the enormous spike in inequality without any mention that it was Obama who oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in world history.

Possibly more damning than what is contained in these speeches is what is left out. Not one word has yet been uttered about the US war drive, which Sanders and Perez, and their colleagues in Washington, support. The Democrats have focused their criticism of Trump on his allegedly “soft” attitude toward Russia, and they have cheered the recent bombing of Syria, which threatened to spark a war with nuclear-armed Russia.

Sanders did his part, appearing on a series of news programs in the aftermath of the Syria attack to voice his “opposition,” not to the attack itself, which he fully supported, but to Trump’s “unilateralism.” Sanders accepted and promoted the propaganda of the US government and media about the chemical weapons attack and backed regime change, insisting that “Assad has got to go.”

The Democratic Party has hailed the reckless escalation of military tensions since the bombing of Syria, including sending the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson off the shores of Korea, and the dropping of the largest nonnuclear bomb in history in Afghanistan. Moreover, it has supported the appointment of many of the orchestrators of these attacks, including ex-military general James “Mad Dog” Mattis, Trump’s defense secretary.

Sanders’ support for US militarism is the clearest refutation of his demagogic rhetoric on domestic

policy. It is impossible to support the foreign policy of the “billionaire class” while opposing its attack on the working class, as the two go hand in hand.

The fact that Sanders is touring with Tom Perez is itself significant. The election for Democratic National Committee chairman was held in February and portrayed as a contentious fight between opposing factions of the party. Sanders opposed Perez, Hillary Clinton’s preferred candidate, and supported Keith Ellison, who was ultimately defeated. In the aftermath of the election, Sanders voiced his concerns over the result, stating, “It’s imperative Tom understands that the same-old, same-old isn’t working.”

However, this “opposition” has been carefully calibrated. The obvious hostility to Hillary Clinton among broad sections of the working class, revealed in the election, required Sanders to distance himself to some degree. The purpose of his “left” posturing about “transforming” the Democratic Party is to prevent workers and young people from breaking with this right-wing organization.

The divisions that exist within the Democratic Party between the “Obama-Clinton wing” and the “Sanders-Warren wing” are over tactics, not principle. They all serve to uphold the political domination of the capitalist two-party system.

This has been proven in the trajectory of Sanders’ political career over the last two years. The senator from Vermont, by calling himself a socialist, demanding a “political revolution” and attacking the billionaire class, tapped into the enormous amount of discontent in the working class and was able to win 13 million votes in the primary. In this he was aided by a wide array of upper-middle-class organizations that orbit around the Democratic Party.

What happened to Sanders’ “political revolution”? After losing the primary, he abandoned his criticisms of Clinton and insisted that voting for her was the only way to stop the Trump administration, giving Trump a monopoly on rhetorical opposition to the status quo. Days after the election, Sanders proclaimed his willingness to work with Trump upon taking office, promoting the fiction that the new administration might pursue policies beneficial to the working class. Sanders’ economic nationalism, moreover, is closely aligned with that of Trump.

After Trump was inaugurated, Sanders backed many

of his cabinet nominations, even voting to confirm ex-general Mattis, claiming that he would exercise a “moderating” influence on Trump.

A recent Harvard-Harris survey found that Sanders is the “the most popular politician in the country,” at least among the 16 Trump administration officials and Congressional leaders included in the poll. He has a 57 percent “favorable” rating, compared to Trump’s 44 percent and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer’s 27 percent.

That the only politician identified in popular consciousness with socialism is also the most popular indicates the broad leftwing and anti-corporate sentiment of workers and youth. However, it only underscores Sanders’ role in propping up the Democratic Party in an effort to prevent this sentiment from finding a genuine, anti-capitalist and socialist form.



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