

Bernie Sanders declares his support for Jeremy Corbyn

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Bernie Sanders, the former candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, has toured Britain promoting his book *Our Revolution: A Future to Believe In*.

The Vermont Senator presented himself as an alternative ambassador from the US to Europe in opposition to the Trump administration. Prior to his arrival in the UK, on May 31, he spoke at Berlin's Free University. In Britain, he spoke at events in Brighton, Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and Powys, and Brixton, London.

Sanders' visit coincided with the run-up to polling day in the June 8 general election and he gave his endorsement to Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. At the Brighton Festival, he said of Corbyn, "What has impressed me—and there is a real similarity between what he [Corbyn] has done and what I did—is he has taken on the establishment of the Labour Party, he has gone to the grassroots and he has tried to transform that party... and that is exactly what I am trying to do."

Members of Sanders' team have been heavily involved in Labour's election campaign, working with Momentum, the activist network supporting Corbyn.

At the Brixton event, Labour MP David Lammy said during the Q&A session he had just received a text from Corbyn inviting Sanders to return to Britain after he formed a government. Sanders replied he would be "absolutely delighted".

There is indeed a "real similarity" between Sanders and Corbyn.

Sanders played a vital political role in safeguarding the American political establishment last year, driving a leftward movement of millions, particularly young people, into the dead-end of the Democratic Party. He won 13 million votes across 23 states in the primary elections to select the Democratic Presidential

candidate, on the basis of his claim that he was a "democratic socialist" opposed to the "billionaire class." Losing narrowly, he then called on his supporters to back Hillary Clinton, the favoured candidate of Wall Street.

This paved the way for a presidential contest between her and Donald Trump, the two most reviled candidates in American history. So despised were Clinton and the Democrats in significant layers of the working population that the fascistic billionaire Trump was able to emerge the victor.

Sanders' book *Our Revolution* shares its title with the organisation set up by his team following their defeat in the Democratic primaries. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained, "There is nothing revolutionary about *Our Revolution*," the task of which was to divert opposition to the American political system and capitalism "into the cesspool of the Democratic Party and the Hillary Clinton campaign."

Corbyn plays the same role in the UK, seeking to prevent the collapse of a despised right-wing, pro-war, pro-capitalist Labour Party. Since he became leader in 2015, Corbyn has made repeated concessions to the right-wing Blairites in the leadership—ensuring it is they who determine party policy—while claiming that a progressive transformation of Labour is underway. If he had not done so, then Labour would have faced collapse.

Sanders' constant references to the working class during his promotional tour were made necessary by deep socialist traditions in the British working class. But they were purely rhetorical. Explaining in Brixton how the average American worker earned less today than 40 years ago, despite "an explosion of technology", Sanders had no answer as to why this was the case beyond the greed of the "billionaire class" or

“oligarchy”.

The content of Sander’s “political revolution” and “radical transformation” of the Democratic Party is based on a thin gruel of minimal reforms and maximum moralising.

In Brixton, he reiterated his call for the breakup of the big banks and a crackdown on tax evasion. The first of these policies is counterposed to bringing the US’s finance institutions into public ownership for the provision of social needs, as part of a socialist programme for a workers’ government. Sanders policy preserves private ownership of the banks and the continued accumulation of vast profit. The policy is, in fact, supported by sections of the US ruling elite concerned by the destabilizing impact of “too big to fail” banking. His call for a crackdown on tax evasion advocates only that the super-rich pay their “fair share” of taxes, don’t get too greedy and discredit the system that serves them very well.

This acceptance of capitalist rule while asking the super-rich to scale back their avarice mirrors the “For the many, not the few” slogan of Corbyn’s election manifesto.

The fundamental programme uniting Sanders and Corbyn is economic nationalism. This week, Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey outlined the party’s programme for “industrial patriotism”, based on “the greatness of the British people and our history” and aimed at ensuring “that the products and services we create are manufactured and delivered here in Britain.” Labour’s plans to recreate a British industrial base centre on proposals for an alliance of working people with their big business exploiters, mediated through the trade unions, in opposition to the UK’s global rivals.

Labour’s manifesto also confirms that free movement will end after Britain exits the European Union, with Corbyn stating that “managed migration” will be imposed. Such immigration as is allowed to continue will be that which is most profitable to British corporations.

Sanders likewise champions class-collaborationist policies for American industry against its international competitors. He places the blame for falling incomes on low-wage competition, rather than on the capitalist drive for the highest rate of exploitation. Within 24 hours of Trump winning the election, he said, “If he is serious about creating jobs in America and not in

China, I will work with him.”

Sanders made clear in Brixton that his main concern about Trump was the damage he might do to the perceived legitimacy of the American state, its media and that of capitalist democracy itself. Trump’s recklessness and the staggering growth of US and global inequality are considered by Sanders a dangerous source of social tensions.

All Republicans cut taxes and social spending, he said. The key difference with Trump was his attack on the US media and judiciary—both referenced uncritically—and his association with dictators across the world. This category referenced particularly Russian President Vladimir Putin, who Sanders claimed—echoing the Democrats’ nationalist, anti-Russian crusade—had been involved in cyber-attacks on European and US elections.

In Brixton, he said a central reason for Trump’s victory was that millions of working people had been “left behind” and that the Democrats had lost the election, as opposed to Trump winning it. But aside from this correct statement, the Obama administration’s attacks on workers living standards for eight years were passed over in silence along with its warmongering. Instead, Obama was praised for supposedly turning around the American economy.

Sanders was keen to conceal his role in supporting Clinton and allowing Trump to win. In the Brixton Q&A, he said in answer to a question that it “wasn’t a worthwhile exercise to go back” and discuss the election. This was even as he was forced to acknowledge, “almost all the polls that were done when I was still a candidate had me beating Trump by a larger margin than Clinton.”

At the Cambridge Union, Sanders went out of his way to praise Clinton, stating, “I’ve known Hillary Clinton for now 25 years. We served in the Senate together. In the campaign we had our differences of opinion... but I have a lot of respect for Secretary Clinton, did then and do now.”



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