

Bernie Sanders seeks to derail growing working class opposition to capitalism

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Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders issued a call, published Sunday in the *Guardian*, for a global effort to overcome mounting economic inequality. It cites evidence of gross disparities in wealth, but offers not the slightest prospect for a genuine struggle against the economic system that has produced such levels of social inequality. Indeed, it is aimed at preventing such a movement.

What is most remarkable about the statement issued by Sanders is that in the course of nearly 1,200 words, there is not a single mention of either capitalism or socialism.

Sanders notes that “the six richest people on Earth now own more wealth than the bottom half of the world’s population—3.7 billion people. Further, the top 1 percent now have more money than the bottom 99 percent.”

He continues: “[A]s the billionaires flaunt their opulence, nearly one in seven people struggle to survive on less than \$1.25 (90p) a day and—horrifyingly—some 29,000 children die daily from entirely preventable causes such as diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia.”

Sanders goes on with a litany of the terrible realities confronting working people on a global scale. But what does he propose to do about it?

Sanders offers the emptiest of abstractions: “a new and international progressive movement” that will be committed to “tackling structural inequality both between and within nations.” It must aim at raising living standards for poor and working people while seeking to “rein in corporate power.”

Who will join and lead this international progressive movement? What role will existing parties, trade unions and political leaders play? Sanders does not say.

There are myriad political forces claiming to be

“progressive,” ranging from pseudo-left groups like Syriza in Greece, now ending its third year in power as the policeman of austerity and inequality for the European Union, to openly pro-imperialist parties like the Democratic Party in the United States, whose presidential nomination Senator Sanders sought in 2016.

Sanders takes care to offer no names as potential partners in his “international progressive movement” other than Pope Francis, head of the Roman Catholic Church, one of the most reactionary institutions on the planet, a pillar of the social order that has produced the devastating social conditions cited in Sanders’ column.

Perhaps Sanders aspires to become a secular version of this pope, offering high-flown homilies about social justice while in day-to-day politics he works in the trenches with Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer, who has received more Wall Street cash than any other member of Congress.

The senator is quite aware of the subjects he is avoiding. He has based his political career on professions to political “independence” and support for “democratic socialism.” This stance attracted the support of millions in the 2016 Democratic primary campaign, shocking and dismaying not only the bourgeois political establishment, but Senator Sanders himself.

Sanders was the beneficiary of a leftward movement of broad sections of workers and youth, but he did not represent this sentiment. His task was to channel opposition back behind the Democratic Party, culminating in his endorsement of Hillary Clinton, the preferred candidate of Wall Street and the military. For his services, Sanders was elevated to a top leadership post in the Democratic Party caucus in the US Senate.

For the past year, the Democrats have sought to work

with the Trump administration on its reactionary domestic agenda, including tax cuts for corporations and an escalation of the assault on immigrants. Sanders indicated his own support for the latter when he declared last week: “I don’t think there’s anybody who disagrees that we need strong border security. If the president wants to work with us to make sure we have strong border security, let’s do that.”

One day after Sanders’ column, the *New York Times* reported that top Democrats are preparing to work with Republicans in removing all remaining restraints on banks imposed after the 2008 crash.

Perhaps most significantly, Sanders says nothing about the growing danger of imperialist world war, one that would be waged with nuclear weapons. He makes no reference to North Korea, Iran, Syria and other global hotspots, or to the record of the Democratic Party under Obama in bombing Libya, escalating the war in Afghanistan and making drone warfare a staple of American foreign policy. “Military” is another word that makes no appearance in his *Guardian* column, because Sanders is a supporter of American imperialism.

The last thing Sanders wants to see is a mass anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movement among working people in the United States and worldwide. That is why he begins his column with a dismissal of “revolutions,” which he claims haven’t changed anything. This year has already seen significant manifestations of working class anger, including demonstrations and strikes in Iran, Greece, Tunisia, Germany and India. The American ruling class is well aware of the substantial growth of left-wing sentiment and desperate to direct it away from revolutionary politics.

Hence the passive and anemic character of his calls to “action.” He implores, “Let’s wrench power back from the billionaires.” No, *there should no longer be billionaires*. The international working class must overthrow the ruling class and expropriate its wealth. The giant corporations and banks must be transformed into public utilities owned and democratically controlled by the entire population, not a handful of super-rich individuals.

Sanders epitomizes the type of political fraud long associated with Democratic Party politics, combining hollow “progressive” rhetoric with pro-capitalist

politics. Only Sanders makes previous figures in this tradition look like revolutionaries. All those who promoted his socialist and left-wing credentials—*Jacobin* and the *Nation* magazines, the Democratic Socialists of America, the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative—are complicit in this fraud.

A genuine movement against social inequality must be based on the only social force that is unalterably opposed, by its position in society, to the profit system: the international working class. The *World Socialist Web Site* has every confidence in the growth of a worldwide movement of the working class against capitalism and for socialism.

This movement must be politically educated in the struggle against those who, in the guise of its “friends,” seek to administer political sedatives to the working class. Those who wish to become conscious participants in this political struggle should join the Socialist Equality Party, in the United States and other countries, united as sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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