

“You have a perspective from the working man, not from the corporate media”

Workers and young people speak to SEP campaigners at Sanders rallies in southeast Michigan

Tom Hall
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To get involved in the campaign for Niles Niemuth for Congress, visit niles2018.com.

Volunteers for the campaign of Niles Niemuth, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Congress in Michigan's 12th district, spoke to workers and young people at the Bernie Sanders rallies in Detroit and Ypsilanti. Sanders was in Southeast Michigan to stump for Abdul El-Sayed, a former public health official for the city of Detroit running in the Democratic Party's gubernatorial primaries this week.

The sentiment among many of the attendees demonstrated growing anger over rising social inequality, opposition to the drive to war and a deep disaffection with the entire political establishment. Many workers and young people attended the rallies in search of a new political perspective, in opposition to the pro-capitalist policies of both the Democrats and Republicans.

This healthy and welcome sentiment stood in marked contrast to the demagoguery which flowed from the platforms at both events, where Sanders and El-Sayed took turns attempting to convince voters that the Democrats, whose sharp move to the right has been demonstrated by the flood of ex-military and CIA operatives into its primary contests, is a party representing the interests of working people.

Aware that they are standing on politically thin ice, Sanders and El-Sayed staffers sought unsuccessfully to prevent SEP campaigners from speaking to attendees. Journalists from the *World Socialist Web Site* were denied press credentials at both events.

“The decision to try to bar reporters from the *World*

Socialist Web Site and volunteers from my campaign from speaking to rally attendees is a flagrant act of political and press censorship,” Niles Niemuth told the WSW. “It substantiates our argument that Sanders is not a genuine socialist, but a pro-capitalist politician whose aim is to bolster illusions in the Democratic Party as they move even further to the right. They would not censor critical viewpoints if they were confident that their platform could stand serious scrutiny.”

Weston, 16, and **Shae**, 20, attended the rally in Detroit. Shae is studying at a college in Georgia but lives in Detroit. Weston is a high school student.

“I followed Sanders from the beginning of the 2016 election campaign,” Weston said. “I was really upset when the DNC rigged it, and I supported [Greens candidate Jill] Stein because I didn't see Clinton as someone who would support working people.”

Weston said he had been repelled by the experience of the Obama administration. “I think Obama gets credit for more than he deserves,” he said. “In terms of deportations, drone strikes, wars, there was a lot that he did that was terrible.”

Weston said he agreed with an SEP campaigner's argument that “you can't be a socialist and support wars,” but he felt that “the only thing I can say about Sanders is that he seems to be the least war hawkish of the politicians. But I wish there were people who were staunchly antiwar.”

When asked why he thought neither party was opposed to endless US wars, Weston replied, “I think it is about corporate influence. Eisenhower spoke about the military-

industrial complex, and people have money to make off wars, big oil and the arms manufacturers. They're beholden to them on a leash."

Weston said he had been following the *World Socialist Web Site* on Instagram and appreciated its analysis, particularly its exposures of the Democratic Party and parties that "claim to be left." He said, "What I love about your website is that you talk about these issues. Other websites do not challenge the people who are presenting themselves as the opposition or raise the point that actually maybe they are not a real opposition."

Shae added that she was opposed to the anti-Russia campaign by the Democratic Party and intelligence agencies, which has been supported by Sanders.

"I feel like the Russia issue is a turn away from the real issues," she said. "They want to blame our problems on something outside. Now instead of looking at what Trump is actually doing, they're saying it's about Russia. When Hillary blames the Russians for her loss she ignores the fact that the campaign had no voice or message."

Carrie works as a respiratory therapist at one of the major hospitals in Michigan. She was motivated to attend the rally for El-Sayed because of conditions that have developed in the health care industry.

Carrie told the WSWs, "I used to love my job because it is helping people, but in the past number of years, our work load has increased significantly, and you just don't have quality time to spend with the patients."

"At the same time, pay levels remain the same," she added. "They want you to see more and more patients, and it affects the quality of care. The entire hospital staff is overworked and underappreciated. Recently I read about the fact that there has been an increase in the number of women dying in hospitals after giving birth because simple things are being overlooked. This is not the fault of the staff but takes place because of workload. Something has got to change!"

Charlotte, a nurse who works in the University of Michigan Hospital System, criticized the attempt to censor SEP campaigners. "Doesn't that basically go against First Amendment rights? That just seems odd that they wouldn't let you speak your mind here."

Charlotte also discussed the situation of the nurses at UM Health, who have been working without a contract since June 30. "I just don't understand how we can get treated like this, we take care of sick people, and they're trying to cut our retirement benefits. They have so much money." Michigan Medicine, formerly the UM Health System, is projecting a \$103 million surplus off a \$4.3

billion operation budget in 2018.

Michael is a 53-year-old second tier autoworker at Jefferson Assembly in Detroit. He is a regular reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*. "You get a perspective from the working man, not from corporate media. The thing is that power concedes nothing without a demand. Everyone's crabbing and crying about how things are so terrible, but nobody talks about it. It's not in the news."

"You guys brought out what's going on in Kokomo," he said, referring to the WSWs coverage of the strike vote at the FCA transmission plant in Indiana. "I'm at Jefferson Assembly and I'm telling you, people there are so pissed about this whole corruption thing." The United Auto Workers has been exposed for taking bribes from the companies in exchange for pushing through pro-corporate contracts.

Michael said that he was interested in getting involved in an election committee for Niles' congressional campaign.

Niles joined a campaign team at the rally in Ypsilanti, which is located in the 12th District. The campaign team was quickly kicked out of the event location itself, a golf resort on the outskirts of the city, but it held a successful campaign outside the entrance to the facility.

Ricki, who had signed Niles' ballot access petition earlier in the summer, told him, "I supported Sanders in 2016, but I don't support him anymore, ever since he said he would allow anti-abortion Democrats in his administration."

She also added that the Democrats, despite their posturing over Trump's anti-immigrant policies, were complicit in the assault on immigrants and refugees. "Everyone is upset about Trump's deportation policies, but no one wants to talk about the fact that Obama deported more immigrants than ever."

Melissa, a recent college graduate attending the rally in Ypsilanti with a group of friends, told Niles, "A lot of my friends are Communists or consider themselves socialists, and I think they'd be interested to know about your campaign."

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