

# Bernie Sanders holds rallies to prop up the Democratic Party in Michigan

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Senator Bernie Sanders traveled to Michigan Sunday to campaign for Abdul El-Sayed, Democratic candidate for governor in the state's August 7 primary. With less than 48 hours before polls open, Sanders was in full "revolutionary mode," delivering denunciations of the power of the corporate elite to a crowd of 2,000. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1938, "The reformists have a good smell for what the audience wants."

From William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" to Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and Franklin Roosevelt's "Second Bill of Rights," the Democrats have postured as "friends of the people" to block the working class from breaking with bourgeois politics, earning the party the apt moniker of "graveyard of social movements."

Sanders is the latest representative of this tradition. Long gone, however, are the days when American capitalism could provide the economic basis for social reform. Instead, Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign denouncing Hillary Clinton as a tool of Wall Street and calling for "political revolution" ended with his endorsement of Clinton, who had conspired with the Democratic National Committee to subvert his campaign and allow the despised candidate of Wall Street and the CIA to win the nomination.

During the general election, Sanders campaigned as a loyal supporter of the Democratic Party, which is responsible for creating the social inequality he claims to oppose. Under the Barack Obama and Bill Clinton administrations, the Democrats imposed massive cuts in welfare, education, food stamps and other social programs, while they bailed out the banks, cut taxes for the rich and eliminated corporate regulations. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, the Obama administration oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth in American history from the working class to the rich.

Now, in the midst of the growth of working-class struggles among teachers, UPS workers and other sections of the working class, Sanders is once again tacking to the left.

In his speech on Sunday, Sanders decried the fact that three billionaires own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the American population. One of those billionaires, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, "sees his wealth increase by \$275 million every single day, yet he has thousands of workers who are earning wages so low that they have to go on government programs," Sanders declared.

El-Sayed, whose popular call for "Medicare for all" has brought him within single digits of his main Democratic primary opponent, is also responding to what the focus groups and polls tell him voters want to hear. He spoke of his own personal biography, recounting his story as the child of an immigrant and father of a young, biracial daughter. He echoed the vague slogans of Sanders, saying, in reference to the domination of corporate power, "We've got a broken politics."

None of this cheap talk costs the corporations a dime. While Both Sanders and El-Sayed spoke of the need to expand social programs and provide health care to all, neither addressed the central question: Where will the trillions of dollars required to fund such programs be found?

The funding of social programs, the provision of good jobs, health care, education, food, clean water and infrastructure will require a social revolution to place the productive forces in the hands of the working class, which produces all of society's wealth.

More notable than what they said is what Sanders and El-Sayed did not say. Neither made reference to the wars of US imperialism, which have cost millions of

lives, or to the fact that the military and intelligence apparatus drain the country of hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

Sanders all but passed over Trump's attack on immigrants and did not mention that more than 500 children remain separated from their parents in detention centers and foster homes across the country. Neither discussed the fact that the police murder over 1,000 people each year, nor that the National Security Agency continues to monitor the communications of the world's population.

These omissions underscore the fact that Sanders has been deployed by the Democratic Party to block the growth of social opposition and channel it behind the two-party system.

He has spent most of his political life formally outside the Democratic Party, criticizing it as a party of Wall Street and big business. But today, at precisely the moment when tens of millions of Americans are drawing this conclusion, Sanders has made himself the Democrats' chief spokesperson, urging his supporters to turn their opposition to inequality into campaigns to elect Democrats to office.

The Democratic Party has become the preferred party of Wall Street, big business and the military-intelligence agencies. The right-wing billionaire Koch brothers have announced that they will now fund Democratic initiatives and campaigns. Former FBI Director James Comey tweeted that supporters of the intelligence agencies "must vote for Democrats this fall."

The Democratic Party has subordinated opposition to Trump's right-wing attacks on immigrants, his tax cuts for the rich and his efforts to appoint a new right-wing Supreme Court justice to their hysterical and unfounded campaign to blame Russia for all of the social ills that plague America. If the Democrats retake Congress this fall, their cadre of national security and intelligence agents and former combat officers will hold the balance of power (see: "The CIA Democrats").

While the "progressive" Democratic operatives around the El-Sayed and Sanders treat their differences with Clinton and the Republicans as an "intramural scrimmage"—as Obama called the conflict between Clinton and Trump—they treat opposition from the left as an act of war.

The most significant aspect of the events in Michigan

was how representatives of the El-Sayed campaign responded to reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* and a team campaigning for Niles Niemuth, the Socialist Equality Party candidate in Michigan's 12th Congressional District. WSWS reporters were denied press credentials at Cobo Hall in Detroit and at a rally in Ypsilanti, even as the El-Sayed campaign acknowledged that it had granted access to capitalist publications such as the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

In Detroit, El-Sayed campaign officials said they would not allow the distribution of articles that were "negative" toward the El-Sayed campaign and acceded only when WSWS campaigners explained that the First Amendment also applied to articles critical of El-Sayed. In Ypsilanti, Niemuth and his supporters were blocked from distributing material outside of the venue.

The response by the Democratic Party comes not from a position of strength, but from weakness. The WSWS was widely known among attendees, especially among autoworkers and young people, and many at the rally expressed hostility to the El-Sayed campaign's act of political censorship. Sanders, El-Sayed and this supposedly left faction of the Democratic Party are concerned above all that those they are attracting through empty promises and fraudulent politics will have access to a genuine socialist and revolutionary perspective.

The growing mood of social opposition must break free of the stranglehold of the two parties and the trade unions and develop into a massive revolutionary movement to abolish the capitalist system and place the world's productive forces in the hands of the international working class. The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading this fight.



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