

The demise of another Bernie Sanders fraud

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Michigan gubernatorial candidate Abdul El-Sayed went down to a double-digit defeat Tuesday in the Democratic primary, overwhelmed by the near-unanimous support of the Democratic Party establishment for former state senator Gretchen Whitmer. The daughter of former Blue Cross/Blue Shield CEO Richard Whitmer won every county in the state and will go on to face Republican State Attorney General Bill Schuette in the November general election.

In a tweet to his supporters, El-Sayed declared: “The victory was not ours today, but the work continues. Congratulations to @gretchenwhitmer on her primary win. Tomorrow we continue the path toward justice, equity and sustainability.”

When tomorrow came, however, that “path” led to a unity luncheon at which El-Sayed and the third candidate in the race, self-funding millionaire Shri Thanedar, pledged their full support to Whitmer. “Today we all retool and figure out how we make sure that Bill Schuette does not become governor. I’m super committed to that,” El-Sayed said. “Never has it been more important to have a Democrat lead state government.”

Thus ends another episode in the seemingly interminable serial, “Bernie Sanders Tries, and Fails, to Put a Progressive Coat of Paint on the Democratic Party.” Since he rocketed to political prominence in 2016 in his challenge to Hillary Clinton, the presumptive presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, Sanders has played this role again and again.

First, he appeals to the idealism of young people and the economic grievances of working people, claiming to represent a genuine alternative to the domination of American politics by the oligarchy of “millionaires and billionaires.” Then he diverts those who have responded to his campaign back into the existing political framework, endorsing whatever right-wing hack emerges from the Democratic wing of the corporate-controlled two-party system.

In 2016, this involved appealing to his supporters to back Hillary Clinton, the candidate of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus. The Clinton campaign refused to make the slightest appeal to the working class in order to

preserve its support within corporate America and, in the process, drove millions of desperate workers to stay home on Election Day or vote for Trump, allowing the billionaire demagogue to eke out an Electoral College victory.

In the 2018 campaign, where he is not a candidate except for reelection in Vermont, Sanders has endorsed and campaigned for a number of supposedly left-wing candidates in the Democratic primaries, always based on the same pretense, that the Democratic Party can be reformed and pushed to the left, that this party of corporate America can be transformed into an instrument of social reform and popular politics.

The requirements for receiving Sanders’ support and that of “Our Revolution,” the political operation formed by many of his 2016 campaign staffers, are not very demanding. The self-proclaimed socialist does not demand that his favored candidates oppose capitalism or pay lip service to socialism—and almost none of them do.

Their platforms usually include such demands as raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, implementing “Medicare for all,” interpreted in various fashions, establishing free public college education for families earning less than \$150,000 a year, and enacting universal pre-K education. They usually promise not to accept corporate money and to support campaign finance reform.

These Sanders-backed candidates, like Sanders himself in 2016, have very little to say about foreign policy and make no appeal whatsoever to the deep anti-war sentiment among American youth and workers. There is no discussion of Trump’s threats of nuclear war. As for trade war, most, like Sanders himself, embrace the economic nationalism that is the foundation of Trump’s trade policy.

In other words, Sanders uses the image of radicalism and opposition to the status quo that surrounded his 2016 campaign to lend support to very conventional, pro-capitalist candidates, whose policies are well within the mainstream of the Democratic Party—a party whose leadership has embraced most of the measures cited above, secure in the knowledge that it will not keep a single one of these promises and can always blame the Republicans for blocking them.

In Michigan, Sanders spoke at rallies for El-Sayed, and his supporters were quite active on college campuses and on social media, mobilizing support among young people. But as in 2016, there was little effort to reach the working class, particularly minority workers in Detroit, Flint, Saginaw and other devastated industrial cities.

Sanders and the supposedly “left” Democrats he promotes all fervently support the trade union bureaucracy, which is working overtime this year to prevent strikes by angry and militant workers—as at United Parcel Service—and to isolate, terminate and betray them where they break out—as with the state-wide teachers’ strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona earlier this year.

The real attitude of Sanders and El-Sayed to genuine socialism was made clear when they sought to ban supporters of the Socialist Equality Party and SEP candidate for Congress Niles Niemuth from distributing leaflets and holding discussions outside campaign rallies for El-Sayed.

This year, Sanders has been campaigning with a sidekick, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America who won the Democratic congressional nomination in the 12th District of New York, defeating incumbent Representative Joseph Crowley, the fourth-ranking member of the Democratic leadership in the House.

Ocasio-Cortez campaigned for El-Sayed in Michigan and also for several congressional candidates, including Brent Welder in Kansas and Cori Bush in Missouri, who also went down to defeat on August 7. Like Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez claims that the Democratic Party can be transformed into a genuinely progressive “party of the people” that will implement social reforms.

But at age 28, Ocasio-Cortez has less practice in performing the song-and-dance of pretending to be independent of the Democratic Party establishment while working to give it a left cover and prop it up. She was clumsier in her execution, attracting notice as she walked back a campaign demand to abolish the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and sought to downplay her previous criticism of Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people.

After her campaign swing through the Midwest, Ocasio-Cortez traveled to the Netroots Nation conference in New Orleans, an annual assemblage of the left flank of the Democratic Party. She told her adoring audience that her policies were not radical at all, but firmly in the Democratic mainstream. “It’s time for us to remember that universal college education, trade school, a federal jobs guarantee, a universal basic income were not all proposed in 2016,” she said. “They were proposed in 1940, by the Democratic president of the United States.”

The reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt was inadvertently revealing. Roosevelt adopted reform policies, including many of those suggested by the social democrats of his day such as Norman Thomas. He was no socialist, but rather a clever and conscious bourgeois politician who enacted limited reforms in a deliberate effort to save the capitalist system.

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez likewise seek to save the capitalist system, but under conditions where no such reforms are possible. The American ruling class no longer dominates the world economy, but is beset by powerful rivals in both Europe and Asia. It is pouring resources into the military to prepare for world war. And at home, even the most modest measures run up against the intransigent opposition of the super-rich, who control both parties and demand even greater wealth for themselves at the expense of working people.

Under these conditions, the Democratic Party is not a party that can or will carry out social reforms in order to save capitalism, as in Roosevelt’s day. It is a party that will carry out the dictates of the ruling class for war and austerity while using the services of “left” politicians like Sanders to confuse and disorient working people and youth.

Thus, at Netroots Nation, the assembled “left” Democrats gave a loud ovation to Ocasio-Cortez, but also to Gina Ortiz Jones, the Democratic nominee in the 23rd Congressional District of Texas, also young, nonwhite and female. Ortiz Jones has another characteristic, however. She is a career Air Force intelligence officer who was deployed to Iraq, South Sudan and Libya—all the scenes of US-instigated bloodbaths.

Ortiz Jones is one of nearly three dozen such candidates chosen to represent the Democratic Party in contested congressional districts around the country. Another such candidate is Elissa Slotkin, who won the Democratic nomination Tuesday in Michigan’s Eighth Congressional District. Slotkin served three tours with the CIA in Baghdad before being promoted to high-level positions in the Pentagon and the Obama-era National Security Council.

The fake leftism of Bernie Sanders in alliance with the CIA: That is the formula for the Democratic Party in 2018.



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