

Democratic Socialists of America endorses Bernie Sanders presidential bid

Genevieve Leigh
23 March 2019

On Thursday evening, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) announced via Twitter that it is endorsing Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party presidential primary. The decision, telegraphed well in advance, became official at Thursday's meeting of the National Political Committee (NPC), a sixteen-person body which functions as the "board of directors" of the DSA.

The vote came after an "advisory poll" was sent to DSA members a week after Sanders announced his 2020 bid. Just over 13,000 DSA members—24 percent of those eligible—participated in the survey. About 76 percent of those who responded indicated support for endorsing Sanders' campaign, while 24 percent said they were opposed.

While there have been some points of debate on various aspects of the endorsement within the leadership of the DSA, the announcement was no surprise. The organization has been planning their role in the Sanders 2020 campaign ever since he lost the Democratic nomination to Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Last month's edition of *Jacobin* magazine, which is associated with the DSA, was almost exclusively dedicated to supporting Sander's bid for the Democratic nomination, complete with a front cover title: "I, president of the United States, and how I ended poverty" next to a picture of Sanders.

In the fall of 2018, the DSA National Electoral Committee (NEC) produced a 14-page document in anticipation of Sanders' announcement, stating in its opening paragraphs, "If DSA is to play an important role in Sanders's campaign—both growing DSA as a serious, independent, socialist pole in the broader Sanders movement, and helping Sanders win the Democratic Party primary and go on to defeat Trump in the general election—then it is essential that DSA get

involved in this campaign as early as possible."

The document then spends a page outlining the process by which the DSA would formally endorse the Sanders campaign. A heavy emphasis is put on the need to move quickly, stating that otherwise, "We risk starting late and playing only a background role in the larger mobilization behind Sanders and his program."

While the DSA had ostensibly not decided to endorse Sanders at the time of publication of its document, the NEC dedicated the following eight pages to outlining the initial campaign plan to support Sanders, and only a few sentences to what the DSA would do if it decided not to make the endorsement.

The DSA is eager to play the leading role in channeling social opposition behind the Sanders campaign and the Democratic Party. The leaders of the DSA hope thereby to secure more lucrative positions within the party and its affiliated organizations.

It is also playing an assigned role, namely that of seeking to redirect the growing interest among young people in socialism into the safe confines—from the standpoint of the ruling class—of the Democratic Party. For this reason, the DSA has been promoted by the corporate media and the Democratic Party itself, with *Jacobin* magazine elevated in Google search rankings.

Sanders has been quite open about his intentions. Answering a question at a recent CNN town hall event about why he chose to run as a Democrat, Sanders replied by noting that he is "a member of the Democratic leadership of the United States Senate." He added that "more and more people are disenchanted with both the Republican and Democratic plank" and that his role, "as somebody who was an Independent, we can bring them into the Democratic Party."

The Democratic Party, as a result of its right-wing policies, has lost significant support among workers,

and particularly among young people. Sanders sees his role as utilizing his reputation as an “independent” to convince workers and young people not to seek an alternative. His left-sounding rhetoric on the campaign trail is intended for this purpose, while he says nothing about the fact that his own party is responsible no less than the Republicans in creating the conditions that he ostensibly opposes.

This was Sanders’ role in 2016, when he directed those who voted for him in the primaries to support Clinton, who he had previously criticized as the candidate of Wall Street, in the general elections—as the only way to defeat Trump. Sanders has already pledged to support whomever is nominated by the Democrats—as the only way to get rid of Trump.

Whatever comes out of the process, the Democrats will continue their right-wing trajectory. Over the course of the past two years, the Democrats have waged the opposition to Trump on the basis of support for the military and intelligence agencies and demands for a more aggressive line against Russia. If Sanders were to win the nomination and win the presidency, moreover, he would abandon his proposed reforms with extreme rapidity.

As for the DSA, it operates one degree, or perhaps a half or a quarter degree, removed from Sanders himself. While speaking about “socialism” a little more often, or suggesting that they might be called on to pressure Sanders to fight, they lend their services in propping Sanders up, who is propping up the Democratic Party, which is a principal instrument of the political rule of Wall Street and the military. And behind the DSA are innumerable organizations—the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative, etc.—looking for auxiliary roles.

None of this has anything to do with socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact