

Democrats abstain from voting on their own “Green New Deal”

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On Tuesday afternoon, US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican, put the “Green New Deal,” a policy proposal co-sponsored by 89 out of 235 Democrats in the House of Representatives and 11 out of 47 in the Senate, up for a vote on the Senate floor.

The “Green New Deal” has made endless headlines since it was introduced over a month ago by two Democrats: New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, and Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey. The content of the proposal is a non-binding resolution introduced in both houses of Congress calling for transitioning American energy production to non-carbon-based sources within 10 years.

The WSWs has previously exposed the bogus character of the “Green New Deal,” which promotes the fiction that there is a solution to climate change within the framework of the United States and while preserving the capitalist system—in other words, a national, “free market” solution to a threat to the existence of humanity that requires global economic planning only possible under world socialism (see: “The fallacies and evasions of the Green New Deal”).

Tuesday’s political stunt added new layers of duplicity, with the Republicans carrying out a cynical maneuver to force the Democrats to vote for the bill offered by Markey and Ocasio-Cortez. Instead, not a single Democrat did so.

The final tally was 57-0 against the bill, with 43 Democrats voting “present,” the equivalent of abstaining. The 11 Democratic senators who had publicly endorsed the bill declined to vote for it, including such presidential candidates as Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris, Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren. Three Democrats openly voted no: Joe Manchin from West Virginia, Kyrsten Sinema from

Arizona (a one-time Green Party activist!), and Doug Jones from Alabama. Senator Angus King from Maine, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, also voted against it.

The overwhelming majority of Republicans are deeply hostile to any government action on the issue of climate change, with many going as far to deny the existence of a climate crisis altogether. Others oppose climate change policy because they, along with many Democrats, are paid stooges of big fossil fuel companies. Some fall into both categories.

McConnell and the Republicans called a vote on the issue knowing it would cause a crisis for the Democratic Party. They hoped to force Democrats to publicly dissociate themselves from the bill—and thus embarrass themselves in front of young people and others genuinely committed to fighting climate change—and on this score they succeeded.

What accounts for the zero votes in favor of a policy proposal that is being co-sponsored by 100 Democratic representatives and senators? After all, it has been endorsed by many 2020 Democratic Party presidential candidates, and action on climate change has broad support throughout the country, even in many Republican districts.

The Democrats could not agree to a vote, first and foremost, because they knew it would reveal that most of them oppose even this minimal and non-binding resolution. The vote is another indication that the Democratic Party has no intention of passing the “Green New Deal,” or any other policy proposal which might infringe on the profits of big business, to which they are tied hand and foot.

The leader of the Democrats in Congress, multimillionaire Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, has derisively referred to the resolution as a “green

dream.” For his part, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, known as the “senator from Wall Street,” has received \$310,020 from the oil and gas industry throughout his political career.

Even Democratic supporters and co-sponsors of the Green New Deal with less damning pro-corporate records have since qualified their support, calling the proposal merely “aspirational.” In the words of co-sponsor and Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Amy Klobuchar, it is at best “something that we need to move toward.”

However, the most deceitful aspect of the whole framework of this “debate” lies in the content of the Green New Deal itself. While drawing attention to some of the most critical aspects of the climate crisis, this proposal, even if it were adopted by Congress, would have zero impact on federal policy. Its non-binding status means that the US government would not in any way be required to work toward its stated goals.

So far to the right is the Democratic Party that it cannot even be pressured to vote for a proposal brought forward by its own representatives that requires that it does nothing!

It is in this context that the role of Ocasio-Cortez, the face of the Green New Deal, must be understood. Her role in Tuesday’s drama was to encourage Democrats to vote “present” to cover over the divisions within the party over this political fraud.

Ocasio-Cortez is painted by the media and the various fake-left organizations in the orbit of the Democratic Party, above all the Democratic Socialists of America, as an insurgent who is “taking on” the old guard of the party. Her “Green New Deal” has been held up as evidence of her commitment to “radical” change.

Tuesday’s debacle revealed on a small scale the entire political function of Ocasio-Cortez. Instead of pressuring the Democrats to take a stand on the Green New Deal, she covered for their refusal to do so.

Political figures and parties must be judged, as Lenin once put it, “not by the glittering uniforms they don or by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions and by what they actually advocate.”

Ocasio-Cortez is a Democrat, who supports Democratic Party policies, toes the Democratic Party line, advocates supporting Democratic Party

candidates, and praises the stellar leadership of Speaker Pelosi, a key political agent of the US ruling elite and the military-intelligence apparatus.

She criticizes social inequality, global warming, etc. but refuses to say anything about the social system that produces these maladies and the political forces responsible for them. She proposes curing inequality by supporting the Democratic Party, one of the two parties that promotes it. She proposes to attack the wealth of the rich while leaving untouched the economic system upon which this wealth is based. In the case of climate change, she calls for radical policies (in words) on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, while on Tuesday giving her party an amnesty when it came to an actual vote.

The media campaign around Ocasio-Cortez and her Green New Deal is a repetition of the operation that was mounted behind the 2016 Sanders campaign, which was used to promote the fiction that the Democratic Party can be reformed. Sanders’ own role in 2016 was to channel opposition behind Hillary Clinton, the candidate of the military and Wall Street. Ocasio-Cortez is being primed to perform this same role in the 2020 elections.

There exists a powerful force capable of taking on the issue of climate change, along with every other fundamental issue facing humanity today, and it is not the Democratic Party. It is the American and international working class, in the struggle for socialism.



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