

Democratic Party establishment wages war on Sanders

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Top Democratic officials and Democratic-aligned media outlets are engaged in a coordinated offensive against the campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

In an extraordinary interview published Tuesday, the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, denounced Sanders and refused to commit herself to support Sanders if he wins the Democratic presidential nomination this year.

Clinton was being interviewed about a forthcoming documentary set to premiere at the Sundance Festival and air on Hulu beginning March 6. “He was in Congress for years. He had one senator support him,” Clinton says. “Nobody likes him, nobody wants to work with him, he got nothing done. He was a career politician. It’s all just baloney and I feel so bad that people got sucked into it.”

Asked if this characterization still held good, Clinton told the *Hollywood Reporter* that it did. Asked if she would support Sanders if he won the Democratic nomination this year, Clinton declined to say, adding, “I’m not going to go there yet. We’re still in a very vigorous primary season.”

She went on to denounce Sanders and his core advisers—who include his wife Jane, former Ohio state Senator Nina Turner and other women—as incorrigibly sexist. “It’s his leadership team. It’s his prominent supporters. It’s his online Bernie Bros and their relentless attacks on lots of his competitors, particularly the women,” she said, adding that Sanders “seems to really be very much supporting it.”

With this vicious personal smear, Clinton reminds the public why she was so hated in 2016. As the embodiment of the corrupt Democratic Party establishment, she managed to lose the presidential election to Donald Trump.

Her refusal to say that she would support Sanders is remarkable. In effect, Clinton is suggesting that she might side with Trump against the nominee of her own party.

Clinton’s statement is the culmination of a week of political provocations and personal attacks. The offensive was set off by the political stink bomb launched with the help of CNN by Senator Elizabeth Warren, who claimed that at a private meeting in 2018—attended only by the two senators, without aides—Sanders told her that a woman could not win the presidency in 2020.

Sanders has repeatedly denied this claim and pointed out its absurdity, since Hillary Clinton actually won the popular vote in 2016. Leading up to that campaign, he met with Warren and offered to support her in a challenge to Clinton for the Democratic nomination. Sanders ran himself only when Warren told him she would not.

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, a long-time media mouthpiece for the Democratic establishment, provided his own contribution Tuesday by denouncing the Sanders campaign for allegedly lying about former Vice President Biden’s support for cuts in Social Security.

Krugman takes a minor campaign incident—a Sanders aide posted an out-of-context video snippet of Biden—as though it was a political crime, describing it as “bad... almost Trumpian.” He adds, “The last thing we need is another president who demonizes and lies about anyone who disagrees with him, and can’t admit ever being wrong.” In fact, Biden did at one time speak of cutting Social Security cost-of-living increases.

These denunciations coincide with the heavily publicized joint endorsement of Senator Warren and Senator Amy Klobuchar by the editorial board of the *New York Times*, in a statement published in its Monday print edition.

While the editorial was not headlined, “Anybody but Sanders,” that is the essential thrust of it. The *Times*’ effort to boost Warren against Sanders is deemed particularly urgent by the party establishment, given Sanders’ rise in the polls in both Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two states where voting will take

place in early February. With greater enthusiasm, the newspaper also promotes Klobuchar, rather than former Vice President Joe Biden or former South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg, as the candidate of what the *Times* terms the “realist” wing of the Democratic presidential field.

The joint endorsement of two female candidates, one for each “lane” of the nomination contest (“radical” and “realist” in the editorial’s phrasing) serves the *Times*’ relentless campaign to inject race and, in this case, gender, into American politics, while downplaying class and economic inequality. Thus the editorial concludes with the injunction, “May the best woman win.”

What do Clinton, Krugman and the *Times* editors fear? The Democratic Party has two principal constituencies: finance capital and the CIA. Both of these constituencies are opposed to a Sanders nomination. They do not want to run an election that makes an appeal to opposition to social inequality or war. Sanders has returned to the latter theme in the wake of Trump’s assassination of Iranian General Suleimani.

The vicious tone of Clinton’s declaration is revealing. If Sanders were to become the frontrunner for the nomination, the party establishment and the media would seek to wreck his campaign. If Sanders won the nomination, they would try to defeat him, either openly supporting Trump or running a third-party “independent” candidate such as billionaire Michael Bloomberg, who has already entered the Democratic contest for the purpose of blocking Sanders. If, despite such efforts, Sanders were to win the general election, they would seek to sabotage his administration and block any attempt to pass Sanders-backed legislation through Congress.

What this shows is the bankrupt and essentially reactionary role of Sanders himself.

In 2016, when the campaign of the self-styled “socialist” attracted the support of millions, staggering the political establishment and the senator himself, Sanders dutifully wound up his bid for the nomination despite brazen cheating by the Democratic National Committee, which was brought to light through documents published by WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. The senator, who won wide support decrying the influence of the “billionaire class,” turned on a dime and endorsed and campaigned for the chosen candidate of Wall Street, Hillary Clinton.

This year, while Clinton will not pledge to support Sanders, Sanders has already committed to supporting whichever candidate wins the Democratic nomination. This is under conditions where millions of workers and

youth have already demonstrated through strike action and protests in the street that they are prepared to go far beyond the political limits prescribed by the Democrats, the second oldest capitalist party in the world.

Sanders portrays the Democratic Party, a ruthless defender of Wall Street and American imperialism, as a potential political vehicle for “revolution” against the corporate elite. In this exercise in mass deception, he has the assistance of an array of pseudo-lefts, from Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Democratic Socialists of America to *Jacobin* magazine and Socialist Alternative. They all seek to make sure that the mounting social anger in America does not escape the death-grip of the Democratic Party.

Sanders is not the spokesman of the political radicalization of workers and youth and the growing opposition to capitalism. Rather, his role has always been to contain this opposition within the framework of capitalist politics. His “political revolution” has boiled down to an effort to convince his supporters to support the Democratic Party.

For these services, Sanders is kicked in the teeth, which only demonstrates the futility of what he claims is possible.

To defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights and oppose the growing threat of imperialist war, workers and young people must break out of the straitjacket of the Democratic Party. Not a single step forward can be taken in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism without establishing the political independence of the working class from all the corporate controlled parties. This is the perspective that will be fought for by the Socialist Equality Party in 2020.



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