After impeachment debacle and Iowa chaos

Hillary Clinton launches new attack on Sanders

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In the aftermath of the Democrats' impeachment debacle and the chaotic breakdown of the Iowa caucuses, the Democratic Party establishment has stepped up its efforts to undermine the campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders for the party's presidential nomination.

With Trump's poll numbers rising, despite the shift to the left among working people and youth reflected in the broad support for Sanders, the Democratic leadership is determined to suppress the issue of social inequality in the 2020 campaign for fear of encouraging the growth of social opposition and anti-capitalist sentiment.

The lead role in attacking Sanders from the right has been given to the Democrats' defeated 2016 presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton. On Thursday, one day after the Senate's acquittal of Trump and in the midst of the continuing vote-counting debacle in Iowa—and one day before the Democratic presidential debate in New Hampshire—Clinton intervened once again to accuse Sanders of dividing the Democratic Party and leading it toward disaster in the November election.

Appearing on the "Ellen DeGeneres Show," Clinton attacked Sanders without naming him. Implicitly branding Sanders an extremist, she said, "You've got to be responsible for what you say and what you say you're going to do. And if you promise the moon and you can't deliver the moon, then that's going to be one more indicator of how we just can't trust each other."

This comes in the wake of Trump's State of the Union address on Tuesday, in which he once again placed the defeat of socialism at the center of his reelection campaign and his efforts to create a fascist force to throw against the growing movement of the working class.

Last month, as Sanders' poll numbers were rising in the run-up to the Iowa caucuses, the first contest in the Democratic primaries, Clinton told an interviewer, "Nobody likes him [Sanders], nobody wants to work with him, he got nothing done… It's his online Bernie Bros and their relentless attacks on lots of his competitors, particularly the women."

She refused, when asked, to commit to supporting Sanders should he win the nomination. Subsequently, after coming under criticism from within the party, she indicated that she would support a Sanders campaign.

This is despite Sanders' repeated assurances that he will support whomever is nominated by the Democrats in November and his treacherous role in 2016, when the supposed leader of a "political revolution" against the "billionaire class" endorsed Clinton after she won the primary contest and then hustled votes for the widely despised candidate of the banks and the military-intelligence establishment.

Clinton's attacks on Sanders are part of a concerted campaign by leading Democrats and media outlets aligned with the Democratic Party, from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to CNN, NBC and other major media outlets. The breakdown of vote-counting in Iowa was used by the state Democratic Party and the Democratic National Committee to downplay Sanders' victory in the popular vote in the caucuses and his virtual tie with Pete Buttigieg, the right-wing former naval intelligence officer and one-time mayor of South Bend, Indiana, in the race for delegates to this summer's party convention, and declare Buttigieg the winner.

The state party's three-day delay in reporting the results was also a boon to former Vice President Joe Biden, favored by the party establishment to be its "centrist" opponent of Trump, who suffered a humiliating defeat in Iowa, coming in fourth behind Sanders, Buttigieg and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren.

The Democratic establishment's increasing attack on socialism and gang-up against Sanders continued in Friday night's debate in New Hampshire, four days in advance of that state's primary election.

The debate began with ABC News anchor George Stephanopoulos inviting Biden to repeat his charge from earlier in the week that the nomination of Sanders, who occasionally calls himself a "democratic socialist," would undercut Democrats running for office at every level in the face of Trump's tirades against socialism.

Biden obliged, saying that Trump would use the fact that "Bernie has labeled himself a democratic socialist."

Asked to respond, Sanders evaded the issue of socialism. Instead, he said, "Trump lies all the time," and declared, "At

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the end of the day, the way we defeat Trump—no matter who wins [the nomination]—we all stand together to beat Trump."

Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, part of the right-wing grouping that includes Biden and Buttigieg, piled on, saying the party did not "want to divide," but instead needed to "bring people together." She explained that this meant winning independents and moderates and said Trump's nightmare was facing "someone who can bring people in from the middle." She added, "That's me."

Buttigieg was next, saying it was a "risk to fall back on the familiar of having a nominee who is dividing the country." Asked by Stephanopoulos if he was talking about Sanders, the former naval intelligence officer said, "Yes," adding that he, in contrast, represented the "politics of addition and inclusion."

All of the major candidates declared their support for the right-wing basis on which the Democrats have opposed Trump, including in their impeachment drive. From the outset of Trump's tenure, they have been guided by one overriding aim—to deflect the mass opposition to Trump's racism, militarism and pro-corporate policies away from a popular movement of social opposition and channel it behind their foreign policy agenda, which centers on a more aggressive confrontation with Russia than that endorsed by Trump.

During the debate, Biden called on everyone in the hall to give a standing show of support to Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, a rabid anti-communist and Ukrainian nationalist who headed the Ukraine desk at the National Security Council and was fired by Trump on Friday for testifying at the House impeachment inquiry. Vindman denounced Trump for withholding military aid from Ukraine in order to pressure Kiev to announce a corruption investigation into Joe Biden and his son, Hunter. This was the core of the Democrats' impeachment drive, based on the claim that Trump betrayed America, sided with Russia against an ally under attack from Moscow, and undermined US national security.

That the Democrats, following the ignominious outcome of their impeachment drive, intend to continue their McCarthyite campaign against Russia was indicated by the publication of an editorial Friday by the *Washington Post* demanding new sanctions against Russia in retaliation for its role in attacking Al Qaeda-linked "rebel" forces in northwestern Syria.

In the debate, Warren backtracked on her previous call for "Medicare for all," continuing a path that began weeks ago when she came under attack by bankers and the billionaire former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg for calling for a wealth tax on billionaires to pay for the program. She instead declared "corruption" to be the central issue and then sought to inject racial politics into the debate, declaring that she would enact "race-conscious laws" on education, employment and entrepreneurship.

The impeachment debacle has further demoralized the Democratic Party and exacerbated its crisis and internal divisions, raising the possibility of a split even before the November election. The dominant faction is determined to suppress the class issues of social inequality that are driving the growth of working class opposition, and to run a campaign based on anti-Russian and anti-Chinese militarism combined with the racial and gender politics of the party's privileged upper-middle class constituency.

The Sanders wing, which includes the various pseudo-left organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America, seeks to use populist phrases to contain social opposition and a still inchoate support for socialism and channel them back behind the Democratic Party and the capitalist two-party system.

In an article in the *New York Times* on Friday, columnist David Brooks summed up the crisis of the Democratic Party as follows: "Democrats may end up in a position in which they can't nominate Bernie Sanders because he's too far left, and they can't not nominate him because his followers would bolt from a Biden/Bloomberg/Buttigieg-led party." Brooks noted that tens of thousands of Sanders voters in the 2016 Democratic primaries ended up going for Trump in the general election after the Democrats nominated Clinton and Sanders lined up behind her.

The millions of workers and youth who are attracted to Sanders are looking for a means to oppose the evils of capitalism—poverty, inequality, war and repression. They are supporting Sanders not because they believe in the Democratic Party, and they will soon learn the hard way that Sanders is a false prophet who defends the system no less than Biden or Clinton.

The Socialist Equality Party offers the only way forward in the struggle against Trump and the capitalist ruling elite he represents. It is running candidates in the 2020 election—Joseph Kishore for president and Norissa Santa Cruz for vice president—on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program. Those who want to oppose inequality, war and dictatorship should support our campaign and make the decision to join the SEP.

For more information on the SEP election campaign and to sign up, visit socialism2020.org.

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