

Bernie Sanders threatens delegates with removal if they criticize Biden

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Senator Bernie Sanders' political team has asked some of his delegates to sign an agreement preventing them from criticizing Democratic Party leaders on social media, including the presumptive presidential candidate Joe Biden, or talking to reporters without approval.

The rules for Sanders delegates to this summer's Democratic convention, which were leaked to the *Washington Post*, include a social media policy, a nondisclosure agreement and a delegate code of conduct.

Delegates were told that they "are expected to follow" the guidelines, and that "failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to your removal from the delegation." The orders, five pages long, are designed to stifle any opposition to the Democratic presidential nominee and prevent any exposure of divisions within the party.

The most significant and controversial rule explicitly prohibits delegates from criticizing the Biden campaign. It reads: "Refrain from making negative statements about other candidates, party leaders, Campaigns, Campaign staffers, supporters, news organizations or journalists." Instead, delegates are encouraged to share "campaign-approved content."

The document continues: "If a member of the media contacts you about a posting of any kind: do not respond." Delegates are instructed to refer all inquiries to the Sanders press office.

In one particularly ominous passage the document advises delegates to think twice about posting anything controversial: "Before tweeting or posting from your personal social media accounts, ask yourself these questions: If this appeared on the front page of *The New York Times*, would it compromise Bernie Sanders's message, credibility, or reputation? Could it

potentially risk your standing as a delegate?"

The move to suppress free speech among his delegates marks a new low for Sanders and further exposes his fraudulent "political revolution." The essential function of the Sanders campaign has, since its beginning in 2015, been to contain mass opposition among workers and youth to the entire political establishment, Democratic and Republican, and funnel it back into the Democratic Party.

At the onset of both of his presidential bids, Sanders won support among sections of workers and youth on the basis of his class appeal. He regularly railed against the "billionaire class" and insisted that workers had basic human rights such as health care. He made lofty claims and promises to his followers regarding the purpose of his campaign. In his 2016 book, *Our Revolution: A Future to Believe*, he wrote that his campaign was "never just about electing a president of the United States" but rather it was about "transforming America."

What has been the actual outcome of the Sanders experience?

In 2016, Sanders worked to channel support behind Hillary Clinton, the widely despised candidate of Wall Street and the CIA, providing Donald Trump with the opportunity to posture as the only candidate opposed to the status quo.

Sanders, who had obtained the votes of 13 million youth and workers in the Democratic primaries, endorsed Clinton and actively campaigned for her. On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, he berated his own delegates for not supporting Clinton. Amid boos, Sanders scolded a section of supporters, admonishing them that "this is the real world we live in," i.e., the "real world" of capitalism and the capitalist two-party system. The next evening Sanders

rose from the floor of the convention to motivate the nomination of Clinton by acclamation.

Despite Sanders' efforts to whip up support for Clinton, many of his supporters remained vehemently opposed to her campaign. Democratic Party leaders, including Clinton herself, largely blamed her 2016 loss to Donald Trump on Sanders, accusing him of delaying his withdrawal from the primary race and refusing to rein in his dissident supporters.

Now, under conditions of a combined public health and economic-social-political crisis of the capitalist system without precedent in American history, Sanders is pulling out all the stops in his defense of the capitalist status quo. Even before the coronavirus outbreak, the United States had been in the grips of an escalating crisis of capitalist rule, with the Democratic impeachment drive and Trump's open incitement of fascist forces coinciding with an upsurge of working class strikes and protests on a scale unseen for decades.

This is what has driven Sanders even further and more openly to the right, and dictated his naked effort to police and muzzle left-wing opposition to Biden.

Since ending his second bid for the presidency last month, Sanders has carried out an aggressive campaign to browbeat his supporters into backing Biden. Sanders and Biden have gone to great lengths to promote party "unity" under the explosive social and political conditions of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The "unity" campaign started with Sanders' groveling endorsement of Biden, in which he made no criticisms and placed no demands on the Biden campaign. This was followed by an interview with the Associated Press in which he slandered as "irresponsible" any of his supporters who failed to campaign for Biden. Former top advisors to the Sanders campaign moved quickly to launch a new super PAC, "Future to Believe In," to direct resources to electing Biden.

Biden and Sanders established phony "task forces" composed of leading members of their respective campaigns to promote party unity ahead of the Democratic convention. This included a friendly agreement over the number of delegates Sanders would be permitted to keep for the convention. The idea was to create the illusion that Sanders supporters had representation and could push the veteran right-wing political operative Biden to the "left."

Sanders' silencing of delegates with threats of removal proves all the more clearly the purely ornamental character of the delegate deal and his role more broadly. Sanders is well aware that Biden, who personifies the Democratic Party as a party of Wall Street and the military, has no intention of adopting any of his mildly reformist policies.

When asked in an interview Friday morning if he would "govern as an economic progressive," Biden evaded the question, saying, "I have a record of over 40 years, and I'm going to be Joe Biden. Look at my record." Even the most superficial look at Biden's record reveals a nearly fifty-year history of servitude to big business, including his role in the Wall Street bailout, the expansion of war in the Middle East and austerity against the working class during the Obama administration. If elected, Biden will carry out a pro-corporate domestic policy and a violently militarist foreign policy.

The coming together of Sanders and the Biden campaign underscores the fraud of Sanders' central claim: that the Democratic Party, the oldest capitalist party in the world, can be transformed into an instrument of progressive change. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Democrats, including Sanders, have voted unanimously for the CARES Act multi-trillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street, and are now working with Trump to force workers back to work under unsafe conditions even as the pandemic continues to spread.

They are implementing the back-to-work drive knowing full well that it will lead to the deaths of tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of people.

Sanders' actions have fully confirmed the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* at the outset of his first campaign in 2015 that he is a capitalist politician seeking to corral opposition behind the Democratic Party and its policy of war and social reaction. Nothing remains of the Sanders campaign except hollow slogans and deceitful phrases.



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