Democratic convention opens with appeal to right-wing Republican support

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The opening night of the Democratic National Convention featured an appeal to right-wing Republicans to support the Biden-Harris ticket, with Senator Bernie Sanders declaring that it was necessary to unite "yes, with conservatives" to defeat President Trump for reelection.

Sanders was given a prominent position in the evening's proceedings, second only to Michelle Obama. He went beyond even his groveling endorsement of Hillary Clinton in 2016—which has been repeatedly attacked by the Democratic Party establishment as insufficiently enthusiastic. He declared the election of Joe Biden to be the solution to all the social and political evils of modern America and, above all, to the growing threat of authoritarian rule emanating from the Trump White House.

"As long as I am here, I will work with progressives, with moderates, and, yes, with conservatives to preserve this nation from a threat that so many of our heroes fought and died to defeat," Sanders said.

Claiming that the Democratic party had embraced "progressive" ideas such as universal health care and free public education, Sanders declared, "Many of the ideas we fought for that just a few years ago were considered radical are now mainstream."

This is a ridiculous fraud. Joe Biden was the Senator from Delaware, the corporate tax evasion capital of America. His entire life has been dedicated to the defense of the social interests of Wall Street, consummated by his stint as vice president under an administration that funneled trillions to the banks, declared crooked bankers "too big to jail" while it allowed millions of families to lose their homes. Harris is a vicious ex-prosecutor and California Attorney General who dragged non-violent drug offenders to prison and presided over the nation's largest prison population.

The unofficial slogan of their campaign, bluntly stated in private by Biden to wealthy donors in New York, is "nothing would fundamentally change."

The first night of the Democratic convention was carefully choreographed by the Biden campaign and the Democratic Party establishment. Sanders spoke only minutes after the appearance of former Ohio Governor John Kasich, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, and three other former Republican politicians, including billionaire CEO Meg Whitman.

All declared their support for Biden, while Kasich, given the role of spokesman for this group, gave this pledge on behalf of the Biden campaign: "I'm sure there are Republicans and independents who couldn't imagine crossing over to support a Democrat. They fear Joe may turn sharp left and leave them behind. I don't believe that, because I know the measure of the man. He's reasonable, faithful, respectful. And you know, no one pushes Joe around."

This reassurance must have been approved word-for-word by Biden himself, and it amounts to a pledge to the American ruling class that there will not a trace of radicalism if the Democratic candidate replaces Trump in the White House. Sanders' own claim that he has pushed Biden and the Democratic Party to the left is nothing more than demagogy aimed at sustaining illusions in this right-wing party.

The real policy orientation of a future Biden-Harris administration was signaled by Governor Andrew Cuomo, who in the course of his remarks described America as "a country that wins wars." There is little doubt that a Biden administration will act on the basis of the anti-Russia and anti-China agitation that the Democratic Party has put forward as the political axis

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of its “opposition” to Trump.

Michelle Obama, the final speaker of the evening, was extravagantly praised for her address, which was devoted to a purely personal denunciation of Trump’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic as incapable, incompetent and indifferent. This is not a hard case to make, but in comparing Trump unfavorably to Barack Obama and Joe Biden, she avoided the central question—thrown back at her by Trump in a tweet the next morning—if the record of the Obama administration was so wonderful, how did Trump get elected in the first place.

The Democratic Party explanation for the 2016 debacle, made implicitly throughout the speeches and videos Monday night, was that Trump won because white workers are racist. There was not a hint from any speaker that the Obama administration, by bailing out Wall Street and imposing the burden on the backs of working people, by continuing and expanding the wars of the Bush administration, alienated large sections of workers, black and white, which allowed Trump to win his narrow victory in the Electoral College.

The video format of the Monday night session, with speakers addressing the television audience from remote locations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored the acute social and political contradictions of the Democratic Party. The oldest capitalist party in the United States, the Democratic Party pretends to represent and defend the interests of workers, the poor and racial minorities, while in reality it is the favored party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus.

In the first hour of Monday’s session, working people speaking from the heart about police violence and the devastating impact of coronavirus alternated with right-wing bourgeois politicians who are just as culpable as Donald Trump for the social, economic and public health crisis wracking American society.

The most powerful attack on Trump came from Kristin Urquiza, a young Arizona woman whose father had voted Republican in 2016, believed official reassurances that it was safe to resume normal activities in May, then contracted coronavirus and died. “His only pre-existing condition was trusting Donald Trump, and for that he paid with his life,” she said bitterly.

Urquiza’s remarks were deeply affecting, but equally angry statements could have been recorded from those who lost parents in New York nursing homes because of the negligence of Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo, or from the bereaved survivors of workers who died after being forced back into Michigan auto plants under Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

Instead of a place in the rogue’s gallery of coronavirus criminals, however, Cuomo and Whitmer were given featured speaking slots Monday night which they used to denounce Trump for the mounting death toll from the pandemic. Meanwhile, they falsely claimed that their own approach—in two states with nearly 40,000 fatalities and 600,000 infections combined—had been successful and humane.

Similarly, two brothers of George Floyd spoke movingly about his murder by Minneapolis police, recalling his compassionate and generous nature. Other speakers described their participation in the mass protests that erupted after Floyd’s killing on May 25.

This was followed less than an hour later by the appearance of Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, given a featured slot to sing the praises of Biden. As the top prosecutor in Hennepin County before her election to the Senate, Klobuchar refused to prosecute a single Minneapolis police officer for violence against the people of that city.

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