

The Movement for a People's Party: No program, no principles, no future

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On August 30, the Movement for a People's Party (MPP) held its inaugural online "People's Convention," which ended with participants voting to create "a major new people's party free of corporate money and influence" in 2021. The MPP's stated purpose is to be a mechanism for candidates to run outside of the Democratic Party, with the goal of achieving ballot status to run congressional candidates in 2022 and in the 2024 presidential election.

The MPP is an example of the type of formation produced by an extremely low level of political consciousness. It is somewhat difficult to comment on because it is not a serious organization. The term "party" is purely nominal. A party is based on a common program, a common assessment of historical experiences, and a common perspective. The MPP has none of these. It does not understand the past, it has nothing to offer for the present, and it has no future.

What predominated among the eclectic combination of individuals, celebrities and media personalities brought together on August 30 was unseriousness, pessimism and a fair amount of dishonesty. The dominant line, however, was provided by those in and around the Democratic Party.

The convention was organized by Nick Brana, who worked with Democratic governor of Virginia Terry McAuliffe and Democratic Senator John Kerry before becoming the National Political Outreach Coordinator for the Sanders campaign in 2016 and a founding member of the Sanders-affiliated "Our Revolution." Brana formed the MPP in 2017 out of the "Draft Bernie for a People's Party" organization, after Sanders' endorsement of Clinton in the 2016 elections. At the time, Brana launched a fund-raising campaign to entreat Sanders to head the "People's Party," which Sanders did not even bother to acknowledge.

Other participants included Nina Turner, a national co-chair of Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign; former Democratic Party presidential candidate Marianne Williamson; professor and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member Cornel West; fired Amazon worker and activist Chris Smalls; comedians Jimmy Dore, Graham Elwood and Ron Placone; actor and DSA member Danny

Glover; former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura; and investigative journalist Chris Hedges.

Many of those participating in the conference advocate a vote for Biden in the 2020 elections. This includes the three main concluding speakers: Marianne Williamson, Cornel West and Nina Turner. West cited approvingly professor Noam Chomsky and Angela Davis, stating that he understood a vote for Biden was part of the development of an "anti-fascist coalition."

Turner, a member of the Democratic Party National Convention Committee in 2020, expressed the basic political orientation of the MPP when she said prior to the event that "there are some progressives who want to '#DemExit' but there are some progressives who believe, 'It's my party, I can cry if I want to and I'm going to stay inside and push.'" These two perspectives "are parallel and the end is the same," she said. In other words, both those who are participating in the MPP, as well as those who are committed to formally staying in the Democratic Party, share the same strategy and perspective.

Then there was Ventura, whose presence expressed the unprincipled and unserious character of the whole operation. Brana introduced Ventura with a glowing tribute, referring to him as a "very special guest." Wearing a polo shirt with the insignia of the Navy Seals displayed on his chest, Ventura proudly proclaimed himself "fiscally conservative," that is, in favor of cuts to social programs. No one participating considered it necessary to distinguish themselves from this right-wing agenda.

The former Minnesota governor combines both anti-war positions with far-right and libertarian politics. In 2011, he appeared on the fascistic Alex Jones program to call for a vote for Texas congressman Ron Paul during the 2012 Republican presidential primaries. Anyone with principles would have had to immediately dissociate him or herself from the MPP based on Ventura's presence alone.

Journalist Chris Hedges denounced more stridently than the rest both the Democrats and Republicans, declaring that a vote for Biden was a vote for war, austerity and reaction.

Hedges was also the only speaker who directly criticized Sanders, calling him a “dutiful sheepdog” in channeling opposition behind Clinton in 2016 and Biden in 2020. He did not remark on the fact that the speakers and organizers of the event were among those assisting the “sheepdog,” nor that many of the people speaking with him were urging a vote for Biden.

These moral condemnations, however, in the end amounted to very little. Hedges concluded with a demoralized declaration that the fight against fascism was futile and doomed to defeat.

He also called for a vote for the Green Party, a capitalist party that serves as an external pressure group on the Democrats (on their website, the main complaint that the MPP has about the Green Party is that its name marks it as too exclusively focused on environmental issues). Where the Green Party has come into power, most noticeably in Germany, it has formed coalition governments with the established ruling parties in order to implement policies of austerity, war and repression.

An indication of what the MPP hopes to achieve, if it were actually to build anything, was given by Brana toward the conclusion, when he held up as models Morena (National Regeneration Movement) and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in Mexico; the Syriza (“Coalition of the Radical Left”) in Greece; and the Podemos party in Spain.

One wonders if anyone involved in the MPP has bothered to examine the politics and record of the individuals and organizations to which they refer. Syriza and its leader, Alexis Tsipras, came to power in Greece in 2015 pledging to end European Union austerity only to impose massive austerity measures. Before it was ousted by the right-wing New Democracy party in 2019, the Syriza government served as the front line of the EU’s anti-refugee policy.

In Spain, the “populist” Podemos party joined a coalition government with the Socialist Party (PSOE) in January of this year. Since coming to power, Podemos has hailed the €750 billion European bailout of banks and corporations as part of the ruling class’ response to the coronavirus pandemic and helped impose the homicidal back-to-work policy in Spain, including by sending police against workers protests.

As for AMLO—whom Brana referred to as “Mexico’s Bernie Sanders,” he is currently overseeing the disastrous response of the Mexican ruling class to the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 66,000 killed according to official figures. Working with the Trump administration, AMLO has forced workers back into disease-ridden sweatshops in order to generate profits for international capital. He visited the US and met with Trump in July, referring to Trump as his

“great friend” and a “great president.”

In relation to the Sanders’ campaign, no one posed, let alone answered, the question: How did we get fooled again? How did the “political revolution” that we championed end up in a campaign behind Biden, that stalwart of political corruption and reaction? No one will acknowledge that the outcome had been predicted by the *World Socialist Web Site*, as this would be to acknowledge the correctness of Marxism.

To the extent that there is a theory behind the MPP, it is that a political movement is built on the lowest common denominator. No differences can be discussed, and any examination of the political role and record of the individuals involved must be avoided at all costs. There is a semi-conscious recognition that if they discussed anything seriously, the smiles would disappear and the whole operation would blow apart.

This politics by eclectic amalgam is expressed in the name itself: the “People’s Party.” But what are “the people”? The use of the term is above all aimed at clearly opposing the MPP to working-class politics, that is, a socialist and revolutionary perspective.

One can venture a prediction that the August 30 convention will be the last time that the various individuals who formed the MPP will all come together. In any case, for workers and youth who are seeking a way to oppose inequality, war and dictatorship, its main purpose is to provide a lesson in what serious politics *is not*.



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