

Post-US election rally of US/UK pseudo-left hears praise for dragging neo-liberalism's corpse "across the finishing line"

Julie Hyland
12 November 2020

The past week has seen a flurry of activity by the pseudo-left on both sides of the Atlantic as to the political issues raised by the US elections.

One online rally, "The US Elections: Lessons for the Left", was chaired by John McDonnell, Labour's former Shadow Chancellor, and featured author Naomi Klein, along with leading members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Momentum in the UK. Billed as the start of a "network" to "claim the future", the meeting started on Saturday November 7, at 5pm GMT, just as the major US networks called the election for Biden, after days of delay.

The mood was one of celebration, with McDonnell saying he was "elated" and could breathe a "sigh of relief". Describing Trump as the "political equivalent of a 'fatburg'", Klein said now there was a "chance to finally clear the drain and get back to work."

These statements were made even as Trump was refusing to accept the popular vote. The delay in announcing the election results was a calculated political decision, as Biden attempted negotiations with Republicans on the make-up of his future administration. Meanwhile Trump was intensifying his conspiracy to stay in office, nullify the result and establish a personalist dictatorship.

Little attention was paid to this unprecedented political crisis, much less the collapse of US democracy that it laid bare. Amid much self-congratulation for the role of the pseudo-left in boosting Biden's vote, the fascist danger was presented in terms of Trump as an individual, and white racism.

Klein said a "debt of gratitude" was owed to those who "got out" the Democrat vote. This had not been organised by Biden supporters, she said, but by those, such as the Dream Defenders and DSA, whose "moral clarity" and

the fact that they had their "eye on the prize" had "delivered this polling."

What did this great achievement consist of? "We dragged the corpse of neo-liberalism over the finishing line", Klein said. This was not 1933, when Hoover lost out to Roosevelt. There was no great New Deal on offer. It was "distressing", she said, that polling showed the economy weighed more heavily than the pandemic for many voters. "82 percent of those of rated the economy" as the priority voted for Trump, she claimed. This is "a big problem for the left" she went on, although "Biden should never be confused with the left." Too many did not see the Democrats offering a real solution in the "middle of an economic crisis." In fact, the Democrats had bailed out the massive corporations and left workers having to decide whether to risk the pandemic or risk homelessness and starvation.

The problem "is that Trump's base cast an affirmative vote. Biden's vote is not affirmative. It's a vote against Trump.", she went on. Now the "left are the levees holding back the tide of fascism", and the question was "What do we need to do to shore up levees?" The answer was to put Biden under pressure, and to present a "vision": a New Deal under which the unemployed could be mobilised to repair schools and mentor students, she said, in a modern-day variant of Roosevelt's National Youth administration.

Speakers from the DSA and Momentum focussed on the "great" result that had been won for candidates such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. These candidacies were little more than window dressing for the DSA's complete prostration before the Democratic Party establishment. Alongside Bernie Sanders, the DSA functioned as Biden's most prominent supporters, selling the long-time scion of Wall Street and American imperialism as the

friend of US workers.

The DSA has nothing to do with socialism. It speaks for a section of the upper middle class seeking a seat at the table within the existing political set-up. Likewise, its unofficial house magazine, *Jacobin*, has functioned as an adviser to the Democrats, even promoting the homicidal policy of “herd immunity”.

This was exemplified by the contribution to the meeting of Alex Press, *Jacobin*’s assistant editor. Bemoaning the “deep atomisation” that had contributed to Trump’s increased vote, Press noted that Sanders had won significant support in such areas in the 2016 primary. “But he didn’t get far,” she noted blandly, as if Sanders hadn’t been nobbled by the Democratic Party establishment—a fix-up that Sanders, the DSA and *Jacobin* quickly reconciled with, just as they reconciled themselves to Biden.

The result was not an “endorsement of Biden”, she said, but spoke to “opposition to Trump.” This meant that “for the next four years, there is a vacuum of space.” Trump “hopefully” would be ejected from the White House. But he has “his movement” which will be energised by claims the election was “stolen by people of colour.” This speaks to the “urgency” as to the fact that Biden “doesn’t stick his neck out for working people”, she warned.

This “urgency”, however, had nothing to do with mobilising working people independently of the Democrats to defeat Trump’s fascistic coup plotting. It was a cover for more bromides as to the need for “a lot of pressure on Biden for 2024 if working people” are going to win [emphasis added]. All the ensuing talk of the need to “agitate” and “organise” had nothing to do with mobilising against the urgent danger in the here and now, but selling a false and reactionary “vision” of getting the Democrats re-elected four years down the line.

As for the British pseudo-left, they are indifferent to the crisis facing American workers. Their sole interest in the US election is how they can utilise it to justify their own rotten scheming with the Labour Party right-wing.

McDonnell praised Sanders for throwing his support behind Biden in the interests of the “party, the country and for the future movement.” He would have given his “right arm” to have the similar support of “defeated elements in the parliamentary Labour Party” after Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership, McDonnell said. The lesson from the US is that you “have to have a united party”, he went on, and “I hope that lessons can be learned.”

This was the theme for a further online meeting Monday evening, organised by Labour fringe groups such as

Tribune, Momentum and Red Labour, in “Solidarity” with the suspended former Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn.

Again, the meeting was not called to organise against Corbyn’s suspension on trumped-up allegations of anti-Semitism. As the WSWs has explained, neither Corbyn nor his coterie has any intention of fighting this, lest it dissuade the Labour right from agreeing his readmittance. It was a plea to Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer to see reason and stop the mass exodus of members from the Labour Party.

In the words of Richard Burgon, Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, “To those thinking of quitting Labour I say don’t leave the organisation”. Civil war in Labour was only serving the Tories when the “Top priority is to unite to force the government to change tack.”

Starmer had spoken of the need for a “broad coalition” to ensure Labour’s win, he said. He should recognise that this “broad coalition... was behind Biden’s win.” “Without the mobilisation of the DSA”, the result for Biden would have been “very different,” Burgon warned.

For McDonnell, Corbyn’s suspension was a “distraction” that he hoped “can be resolved.” If the objection was to Corbyn’s “language or timing, these are issues we can hammer out in discussion. Let’s do it quickly.”

The “large number” of members leaving or threatening to leave the party was a form of “self-harm”, McDonnell said. “The lesson of the US is that you only win elections when you have massive rank and file activity that turns the vote out. It was extremely close. Biden only got there in the end because socialists on the ground turned the vote out.”

Here we have the openly declared mission statement of the pseudo-left—to enable the election of reactionary capitalist politicians and provide political cover for them in office. Workers should reject these organisations with the contempt they deserve and join the fight to build a socialist leadership, the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact