Senator Sanders rediscovers his faux outrage

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With his two bids for the Democratic presidential nomination in the rearview mirror, Senator Bernie Sanders has largely dropped his campaign posture of raging at the "billionaire class," in favor of shilling for them. Over the past two years he has served as a leading advocate of the policies of the Biden administration and the congressional Democratic Party leadership.

Sanders has become a regular on the Sunday morning television interview programs, where he can usually be counted on to deliver a soporific restatement of the latest press releases from the White House or Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, long known as the "senator from Wall Street."

Last weekend, however, was an exception to this rule, as the erstwhile "democratic socialist" suddenly rediscovered the evils of big money dominating the US political system and lashed out against Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Given his close ties with the coal, oil and gas industries, which he represents and even personifies, since his family's million-dollar fortune is based entirely on coal industry holdings, Manchin's identifier should be (D-fossil fuels) rather than (D-WV).

Appearing Sunday on ABC's *This Week*, Sanders delivered a tirade against Manchin after the right-wing Democrat delivered the *coup de grâce* to Biden's last pretense of significant action on climate change and on taxing the wealthy, among the most popular items in the Democratic Party program on which he ran in the 2020 election.

Manchin reneged after months of protracted negotiations with Schumer and the White House on reviving Biden's "Build Back Better" legislation in some scaled-back version, limited to improvements in subsidies for those receiving Medicaid, authorizing Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate lower drug prices and taking some minimal actions on reducing fossil fuel emissions, the main contributor to climate change.

"Scaled back" is actually something of a misnomer, like calling a mud puddle a scaled-back version of a swimming pool. Even that comparison would grossly exaggerate the significance of Biden's original plan: perhaps the proposed Manchin-Biden deal was a spoonful of sludge compared to a bucketful of the same noxious material.

In any case, efforts by Sanders and media apologists like Leah Stokes in today's *New York Times* to portray the potential Manchin-Biden climate deal as the last chance for humanity to save the planet are ludicrous. There is no solution to the dire consequences of climate change without the complete restructuring of the world economy and the abolition of capitalism and the nation-state system, which requires the mobilization of the international working class on the basis of socialist revolution.

Sanders began his appearance on ABC with an extremely mild criticism of Biden for his visit to Saudi Arabia and his notorious fist-bump encounter with Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman. Asked if a President Sanders would have made the trip, he replied, "I don't think so. You have the leader of that country who is involved in the murder of a *Washington Post* journalist. I don't think that that type of government should be rewarded with a visit by the president of the United States."

There has been a fair amount of hyperventilating over this action by the left wing of the Democratic Party, not because they actually oppose the foreign policy of the Biden administration, but because they feel the pretense of outraged disappointment is needed to preserve their "antiwar" pretensions and bamboozle the American public.

These "lefts" support the enormous US military backing for Ukraine, a regime which celebrates the Nazi accomplice and mass murderer Stepan Bandera as a national hero, and do not object to Biden's friendly relations with such reactionaries and participants in mass killing as Indian President Narendra Modi, Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi or the other bloodstained oil sheiks Biden mingled with during his trip to Jeddah.

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As for attacks on journalists, Sanders made no objection to Biden meeting with the Israeli government that recently murdered Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and did not mention the Biden administration's efforts, continuing the campaign of Obama and Trump, to drag Julian Assange of WikiLeaks into a US court to face espionage charges carrying 175 years in a maximum security prison.

Sanders then began venting faux outrage against corporate America profiting from the pandemic. The economy was doing poorly for the working class, he said, "But we should also recognize the economy is doing extraordinarily well for the people on top, for the billionaires who have seen a $2 trillion increase in their wealth during this pandemic while a million Americans died."

Host Martha Raddatz was not so rude as to point out that Biden, Schumer and Sanders were among those setting the policies that enriched the billionaires at the expense of the working class. She is, after all, one of the millionaires who have benefited from this process. She was happy to move the discussion to the subject of the congressional infighting over Biden's proposed legislation, and Sanders erupted against Manchin, declaring, "He has sabotaged the president's agenda."

He claimed to have warned Biden and Schumer against negotiating with Manchin, saying, "the problem was that we continue to talk to Manchin like he was serious. He was not. This is a guy who is a major recipient of fossil fuel money, a guy who has received campaign contributions from 25 Republican billionaires." Manchin was representing "the very wealthiest people in this country, not working families in West Virginia or America."

While Manchin is a particularly egregious case, the same class characterization applies to the entire Democratic Party. Senator Schumer represents the interests of Wall Street, not of the poor and working people of New York. The same is true of every Democratic senator and representative in Congress, and, for that matter, it applies to Senator Sanders too.

Every member of Congress, without exception, defends the capitalist system, which is based on the economic and political dictatorship of a tiny class of capitalists, who own and control the means of production and direct the operations of the entire society. The two-party system, the military-intelligence apparatus and the mainstream media are the principal means through which this financial aristocracy dominates.

Sanders concluded his appearance by declaring climate change to be "an existential threat to humanity," and calling for a vote for the Democrats in November: "what this election must be about is whether or not we're going to vote for candidates who will have the guts to stand up for working people, stand up for the planet and have the courage to take on the billionaire class who dominates our economy and our political life."

But it was candidate Joe Biden, appearing at a Manhattan fundraiser in 2019, who notoriously reassured his audience of multimillionaires that they should not fear a Biden presidency, because "no one's standard of living would change, nothing would fundamentally change."

Sanders had the gall, at an earlier appearance Friday on the SiriusXM program of left-liberal Dean Obeidallah, to say, "Manchin is not particularly concerned about President Biden succeeding. He's not particularly concerned about the needs of working people."

This identification of the Democratic administration and the needs of working people is the biggest lie of American capitalist politics. Neither the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party represents or fights for the interests of the working class. Whatever their tactical differences and bitter struggles over positions of power and influence, both parties respond to the dictates of the financial oligarchy.

In freeing itself from the political stranglehold of the Democratic Party, the working class must understand the role of demagogues like Sanders, and his pseudo-left supporters in organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America, who seek to provide a "left" screen for an utterly right-wing party of imperialist war and corporate domination.

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