

Jacobin, DSA and Sanders promote lie that Harris is progressive

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Of all the stage acts in the Democratic Party's 200-year-old playbill of political deception, perhaps the most hackneyed is the sleight of hand the party conducts at election time to paint its candidates as progressives, even as they move ever farther to the right.

Each election, immense resources are brought to bear to establish that Al Gore, John Kerry, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or Joe Biden is "susceptible to pressure from the left." With this fig leaf, the candidates are freed up to advocate and enact ever more right-wing policies than their predecessor, to launch new and more dangerous imperialist wars, and pave the way for the massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the richest 10 percent.

This year, it has taken an extra hefty crank of the Democrats' Mighty Wurlitzer to present Kamala Harris as a "progressive" given her political record. The former prosecutor and current vice president is complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza and proposes escalating the US-led war against Russia. She has run a campaign based on appeals to Republicans, exemplified by her touting the endorsement of figures like Liz and Dick Cheney. She has likewise placed right-wing attacks on immigrants at the center of her campaign.

In light of this, the stage-managed efforts to present Harris as a "left-wing" figure have acquired a farcical character.

Bernie Sanders, who increasingly plays the role of loyal administration court jester, gave a pathetic defense of Harris on Sunday's "Meet the Press." When Kristen Welker asked him whether the Harris campaign's adoption of increasingly right-wing positions on issues ranging from healthcare to the environment undermine her progressive credentials, Sanders replied:

"No, I don't think she's abandoning her ideals. I think she's trying to be pragmatic and doing what she thinks is right in order to win the election." He presented Harris as an opponent of the "big-money interest" in politics, despite the fact that her entire career has been bankrolled by the corporations. He presented her record of supporting for-profit healthcare as "another approach toward moving

toward universal health care."

Asked directly whether he thought Harris was "progressive," he said, "yeah, her views are not mine, but I do consider her progressive." When pressed as to why he and Dick Cheney support the same candidate, Sanders delivered gushing praise of the former vice president and beneficiary of the stolen 2000 election, saying, "I applaud the Cheneyes for their courage in defending democracy."

Sanders' prostration before Biden and Harris has generated substantial opposition among workers and young people who once believed his claim to be an opponent of the political establishment. Sanders and his co-apologist for the Biden-Harris administration, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have voted to spend tens of billions on imperialist war against Russia, helped illegalize a strike by railroad workers, and defended the administration all down the line.

Capitalist politicians like Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez, long supported by or members of the Democratic Socialists of America, were even more vociferous in their defense of Joe Biden than openly conservative Democrats after Biden's debate collapse in June.

As a result, the DSA has come to play a more prominent role in presenting both Harris and Sanders as susceptible to pressure. To this end *Jacobin* published an article September 7 by prominent DSA member Neal Meyer headlined, "The Left Needs a Real Strategy for a Harris Presidency." It was aimed at supporting the Democrats' public relations campaign to "rebrand" Harris and prop up Sanders.

The article begins with two lies: "As he campaigns for Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders is laying out a progressive agenda for 2025. It's a program that a Harris administration could conceivably get behind, but Sanders and his allies need a way to force it to do so."

First, the only agenda Sanders is laying out is full support for the Biden administration and the Harris campaign. Meyer is forced to acknowledge in the article that "Gone are his references to Medicare for All and the Green New Deal. What's there instead is a more limited platform of

demands,” most of which are “in the Democrats’ 2024 platform.” In other words, Sanders has dropped all but the most meaningless and minuscule calls for reform and has fallen in line behind the leadership he once paid lip service to opposing.

Second, a potential Harris administration will introduce no significant social reforms and Meyer’s claim to the contrary is nothing but an attempt to foster illusions. The Democrats have completely abandoned social reform to such a degree that fascist blowhard Trump can falsely present the Republican Party as the party of the working class.

Meyer has no issue swallowing his pride and backing Sanders’ turn to the right: “While many on the Left—myself included—miss the exciting vision of [Sanders’] 2020 campaign, Sanders’s new program has a compelling logic to it. If Trump is beaten, Harris will be president, and the Left and labor will need a set of winnable demands to organize around.”

Meyer justifies this by claiming that Sanders’s movement to the right increases the likelihood that Harris will enact social reforms. This is the spineless political logic of Democratic staffers and hacks. It has nothing to do with socialism.

Meyer proposes that left-wing critics of Biden and Harris integrate themselves into the Democratic Party apparatus through a process he calls “disruption,” a strategy which he says “could take many forms.” For instance, he asks, “Could Sanders raise cash to open up offices, hire organizers, and build membership-based campaigns in the districts and home states of these conservative Democrats? That would put the kind of real pressure on these politicians that they will actually listen to.” This is a proposal to direct all one’s political energy into the Democratic Party.

Meyer wastes no time in jumping ahead to the pseudo-left’s favorite non-presidential-year trope: Supporting congressional Democrats in the midterms! “Sanders and his allies, especially in the labor movement, need to look ahead to the 2026 midterm elections” by supporting progressive Democrats in primary elections, Meyer writes. “With Sanders and labor’s backing, a renewed effort that brings in groups like DSA, grassroots Uncommitted activists, and local community organizing efforts to take on corporate Democrats could have real legs.”

Notably, Meyer has a specific proposal to run what he calls “independent labor candidates,” but he argues this should be done only “in red states.” He doesn’t say so openly, but this restriction is aimed at avoiding drawing votes away from Democratic candidates in general elections. “US politics would look very different if Sanders were joined in the Senate by even a small handful of labor-backed independents from red states.”

Meyer concludes by once again urging readers to vote for Harris in the election: “Democratic victory is far from certain, which is why Sanders has been unrelenting in his efforts to persuade working people and the Left that they need to join the fight to beat Trump.” Leaving nothing to misinterpretation, Meyer calls this a “very reasonable assessment.”

Nothing Meyer writes is original. It is all a regurgitation of what is said every election year. But the fact that these lies take on a more absurd character today is a product of the growing gap between the growth of social opposition and the pro-corporate, pro-imperialist character of this 200-year-old institution of the American ruling class.

The party which Meyer claims is simply waiting for a little nudge to enact a left-wing agenda is currently waging a genocidal war of extermination against the people of Gaza, killing 200,000 people and cutting millions off from food and water. He downplays this, writing that “many in the Democratic Party’s political class are at least privately uncomfortable with Israel’s genocidal war,” as though the (non-existent) private pangs of conscience of Capitol Hill staffers are any consolation to those residents of Gaza and the West Bank who remain alive. Meyer does not even mention the Biden-Harris administration’s role in the escalating war against nuclear-armed Russia. He admits that Harris is “tacking right on immigration,” noting without critical comment that Democrats believe this may “win back disgruntled working-class voters.”

The sycophancy of the DSA, Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez exposes their role as cogs in the machine of imperialist politics. They attempt to promote the Democratic Party as a catchment area to trap social opposition and direct it behind right-wing candidates of war and inequality. This is combined with efforts to prohibit rank-and-file workers from overthrowing the trade union bureaucracies that suffocate their struggles. The fight against imperialist war, capitalist exploitation and the defense of democracy requires an urgent change in political strategy: It requires building a mass movement in the working class, outside of and in opposition to the two parties of Wall Street and the Pentagon and their pseudo-left appendages.



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