

Following electoral wipe out

After campaigning for Clinton, Biden and Harris, Bernie Sanders accuses Democrats of “abandoning working class”

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Shortly after Vice President Kamala Harris conceded the presidential race to Donald Trump on November 6, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, a stalwart campaigner for Harris, released a statement on his social media accounts excoriating the Democratic Party for “abandoning the working class.”

As of this writing, Sanders’ statement has been viewed on X over 35 million times and has been widely reported in the capitalist press. The Vermont Senator wrote:

It should come as no great surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working class people would find that the working class has abandoned them. First, it was the white working class, and now it is Latino and Black workers as well. While the Democratic leadership defends the status quo, the American people are angry and want change. And they’re right.

While there is much more to Sanders’ statement, this first paragraph serves as its own devastating self-exposure of the political role of Sanders. The first question that comes to mind is: When did Sanders reach this epiphany? When did he come to the realization that the Democrats, a party of corporate America and the Pentagon that he has caucused with and campaigned for for nearly four decades, had “abandoned the working class”?

In fact, the Democratic Party, the party of the slavocracy, of Jim Crow and of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Vietnam War, has never been a party of the working class. It has, and will always be, a capitalist party. Sanders’ political role, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained many times, is to use his nominally “independent” designation to provide the Democratic Party with a veneer of credibility in order to contain opposition to the whole capitalist system.

However, as Sanders’ statement and Tuesday’s election results make clear, this facade is rapidly disintegrating.

In his statement, Sanders speaks of a “Democratic leadership” that “defends the status quo.” What has Senator Sanders’ role

been in this process? For the last year, on television, social media and in the papers, the Vermont Senator has been haranguing workers and youth outraged over unending war, rising inequality and inflation, to back first Joe Biden and then Kamala Harris for president.

In a *New York Times* opinion published on July 13, Sanders called on voters to support Biden, claiming the latter had an “excellent record.” Voters clearly thought differently about this alleged “excellent record,” which included Sanders and the Democrats outlawing railroad workers from striking in 2022 and working in concert with acting Labor Secretary Julie Su to squash major class struggles on the docks and of aerospace workers, most recently at Boeing.

Throughout the summer, as Biden continued to collapse in the polls and mass graves were dug in Gaza and Ukraine, Sanders defended the semi-senile war criminal as a champion of the working class. Even after Biden dropped out of the race, Sanders continued to hail his achievements, opining in an August 1, 2024 interview with Vermont Public Radio, “The truth is that President Biden, in terms of the needs of working people ... has been probably the most progressive president in our country since Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1930s.”

At the Democratic National Convention, Sanders declared that Harris would grab the torch from Biden and carry on the work of building on the latter’s accomplishments, which Sanders again claimed were “more than any government since FDR.”

Nowhere in his statement does Sanders account for his role in supporting the “status quo.” This omission is not a mistake. Sanders is concealing his duplicitous role in promoting the Democratic Party and creating the conditions for Trump’s victory.

In his statement, after noting that wages for workers and their families have been deteriorating for 50 years, Sanders lamented that “we continue to spend billions funding the extremist Netanyahu government’s all out war against the Palestinian people, which has led to the horrific humanitarian disaster of mass malnutrition and the starvation of thousands of children.”

Sanders’ refusal to characterize the over-year-long slaughter in Gaza a genocide, while pinning the blame solely on Netanyahu, is

a textbook example of Sanders “defending the status quo.” The genocide in Gaza is not a bad choice by Netanyahu and a few close advisers, but the shared imperialist policy of the US government that is being carried out by Israel, an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the words of Biden, that the US has militarily, economically and politically backed for over 76 years in order to advance its geopolitical interests in the region.

Massive military expenditures abroad, many of which Sanders has supported, can only be paid for with intensifying attacks on the living standards of the working class. Ignoring this, just over a week before the election, Sanders called on his supporters to back Harris in spite of her commitment to continue the genocide in Gaza because, according to Sanders, “Trump and his right-wing friends are worse.”

The politics of “lesser-evil” pragmatism and subordinating all opposition to fascism, genocide and inequality behind the Democratic Party is exactly why Trump has been returned to power. Sanders, and various pseudo-left organizations that have supported him, namely the Democratic Socialists of America, have played a major role in this process.

Sanders was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1990, where he would spend eight terms voting with Democrats 98 percent of the time as then-President Bill Clinton embarked on a program of “ending welfare as we know it” and building a “border wall” along the US-Mexico border. During Clinton’s presidency, Sanders supported the bombing of Serbia in 1999, while under George W. Bush he backed the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

After eight terms in the House, Sanders was supported in his 2005-2006 Senate race by the Democratic Party establishment. The “independent” senator received endorsements from New York Senator Chuck Schumer, known as the “Senator from Wall Street” and then-Senator Barack Obama, both of whom campaigned for Sanders.

After Obama and the Democrats bailed out the banks in 2008-2009, while millions were thrown out of their homes, Sanders ran for president in the Democratic primaries in 2016. Even though the Democratic Party did everything in their power to stifle support for Sanders, including red-baiting him while slandering his supporters as misogynists for not backing the pre-ordained Clinton coronation, Sanders won millions of votes with his promises to take on the “billionaire class.”

Despite Clinton’s multi-decade record as a war criminal and ardent defender of the financial oligarchy, Sanders folded up his “political revolution” and encouraged his supporters to back Clinton, portraying her as a progressive ally of all working people.

In 2020, a similar story played out. For the second time in four years, Sanders mobilized a wide following among workers and youth with his calls for a “political revolution” and focus on social inequality. As Sanders gained momentum, leading Democrats and the press attacked him as an agent of Russia and uncommitted to defending US imperialist interests abroad.

In response to these attacks, Sanders turned sharply to the right, promising to wage war against Russia, Iran and North Korea in order to defend “our allies” and “NATO.” He eventually dropped out and backed Biden.

While Sanders did not run for president in 2024, he, alongside New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, served as Biden’s top campaign surrogates. Even after Biden’s disastrous debate with Trump, Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders both reaffirmed their support for Biden, with Sanders going on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert to once again claim that Biden “has been the strongest, most progressive president in my lifetime.”

Up until the very eve of the election, Sanders was insisting that Biden was the “most progressive, pro-worker president since FDR.”

Sanders ended his statement this week by declaring that in “the coming weeks and months those of us concerned about grassroots democracy and economic justice need to have some very serious political discussions. Stay tuned.”

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore stated on X, “Sanders is trying to maneuver as a critic, covering up his own long and rotten role, while also covering for the Democratic Party. Whatever initiatives he launches will be aimed at preserving the capitalist two-party system.”

The election of Trump is a serious danger for workers in the United States and throughout the world. Trump’s agenda is that of ruthless sections of the corporate and financial oligarchy that are determined to defend their interests with an iron heel.

The Democratic Party bears principal political responsibility for Trump’s victory. As a party of Wall Street and imperialism, it created the conditions for Trump and the Republicans to exploit social grievances, and now it is working on demobilizing opposition and covering up Trump’s plans.

Sanders has played a critical role in bourgeois politics throughout. At issue, however, is not merely the personal role of Sanders, but an entire type of politics, in the US and internationally, that seeks to channel social anger, preserve and defend the capitalist political system, and prevent the emergence of a movement that articulates the real interests of the working class. As the rise of Trump has demonstrated, it serves only to strengthen the far-right.



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