

Amid anti-immigrant crackdown, Bernie Sanders joins Trump's attack on "open borders"

By Tom Hall
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As the Trump administration stepped up its fascistic crackdown on immigrants, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders made a point of echoing his rants against "open borders."

At a town hall event in Iowa on Sunday, Sanders categorically rejected the call for free movement of people across the border, a policy supported by tens of millions of Americans, on the grounds that the United States, with more billionaires than any other country in the world, cannot afford to take in poverty-stricken migrants and refugees.

When a member of the audience asked how he would "deal with the social services connected with opening the borders, such as health care, medical care," Sanders replied, "I'm afraid you may be getting your information wrong. That's not my view."

He continued: "You open the borders, there's a lot of poverty in this world, and you're gonna have people from all over the world. And I don't think that this is something that you can do at this point. Can't do it."

Just two days before, at a staged anti-immigrant event in the border town of Calexico, California, Trump had declared, "The system is full. When it's full, it's full. You can't take them."

Also on Friday, the Trump administration said it could take two years for it to identify the thousands of children separated from their parents under its criminal family separation policy.

And on Sunday, the very day Sanders raised the alarm over impoverished workers coming to the US, Trump fired his right-wing homeland security secretary in order to move in an even "tougher direction" in his war on immigrants. It was widely reported that this included barring asylum seekers from entering the

country, in violation of US and international law, and resuming the policy of separating immigrant children from their parents.

Far-right immigrant bashers praised Sanders' statement. Richard Spencer, the neo-Nazi leader who helped organize the fascist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, applauded Sanders on Twitter, exclaiming, "Bernie returns to form."

Trump has repeatedly attacked the Democrats for supporting open borders, which is a lie since no prominent Democrats take such a principled and humane stand. On the contrary, for the most part they are petrified at being associated with a policy of decriminalizing undocumented immigrants. Sanders is no different. Despite his fraudulent claims to be a "socialist," he responds to Trump's attacks by adopting his anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Sanders' denunciation of open borders is nothing new. The Vermont senator has long sought to blame immigrants and foreign workers, rather than capitalism, for the destruction of the jobs and living standards of native-born workers. This is linked to his promotion of the trade union bureaucracy, which uses economic nationalism and xenophobia to pit American workers against the class brothers and sisters in Mexico, China and around the world, and line them up behind their "own" corporate exploiters.

In a 2015 interview with *Vox*, as he was launching his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, Sanders denounced open borders as a "Koch brothers proposal," adding, "That's a right-wing proposal, which says essentially there is no United States ... It would make everybody in America poorer."

The fact is, for all his rhetoric about the "billionaire

class,” Sanders is perfectly capable of capitulating to the billionaire con man Trump just as he did in 2016 to Hillary Clinton, the favored candidate of Wall Street.

Many of Sanders’ supporters, who are unaware of his political history and take his self-described “socialism” to mean he is opposed to xenophobia, were no doubt shocked to learn of his statement. But his right-wing positions on immigration flow naturally from his nationalist orientation, which is incompatible with genuine socialism.

Sanders accepts the framework of the nation-state, with its “bodies of armed men,” of which the Gestapo-like ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is one, because he accepts the legitimacy of the capitalist system and private ownership of the means of production. He explicitly rejects the nationalization of industry and fully supports American imperialism, declaring in 2016 that a Sanders presidency would see “drones, all that and more.”

Genuine socialism is internationalist and insists on the unity of workers of all countries. It unconditionally defends the right of workers to live and work in the country of their choice, with full rights and protections.

Those who put their hopes in the Vermont senator should draw a lesson from this squalid episode.

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