

Sanders-Biden task forces and the debacle of Sanders' "political revolution"

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With the unveiling of Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden's "joint task force" proposals for the 2020 Democratic Party platform, Sanders has put the final nail in the coffin of his so-called "political revolution."

The joint task force initiative was first announced when Sanders gave his endorsement of Biden in mid-April. The task forces were composed of leading members of the Sanders and Biden campaigns, including two members of the Democratic Socialists of America: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA. The initiative was meant to promote "party unity" ahead of the election.

The result of the Biden-Sanders collaboration is nothing short of a total repudiation of all the central pillars of Sanders' campaign amid the greatest social and economic catastrophe in US history.

Most notably absent in the proposals is Sanders' hallmark "Medicare-for-all" plan, which has been replaced by calls to "re-open the Affordable Care Act marketplaces" and provide a public option. A reduction in the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 60 is meant to serve as Biden's "progressive" fig leaf on health care. Just four years ago, Hillary Clinton's campaign had called for a lowering of Medicare eligibility to age 50.

Other policies central to the Sanders' campaign that were dropped include a federal jobs guarantee, the Green New Deal, free college tuition and the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Instead, the non-binding recommendations for the Democratic Party platform consist of platitudes about ensuring "equity" for all Americans and minor policy reforms that the

Democratic Party has no intention of implementing.

The Democratic Party platform has no practical import in any event. Many young people and workers will recall that when Sanders endorsed Hillary Clinton, he proclaimed that she and the party had adopted the "most progressive party platform in history."

Sanders, who is proving in real time to be the Democratic Party's most enthusiastic cheerleader, is once again getting out his pom-poms ahead of the 2020 elections. Following the announcement of the task force proposals, Sanders went as far as predicting that Biden could become the "most progressive president" since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Who does he think he is fooling? Biden has a nearly 50-year history of carrying out the dictates of the ruling class. He supported the Iraq war and the end of the Glass-Steagall restrictions on financial speculation. He helped pass legislation that led to the mass incarceration of the poorest and most oppressed layers of the population. If elected, a Biden administration, with the participation of many of those involved in the "unity" initiative, will preside over an intensification of austerity, further attacks on democratic rights and an expansion of war and militarism.

The prostration of Sanders before the Biden campaign was entirely predictable and in line with the nature of his campaign. As reality has demonstrated so clearly the need for socialism, Sanders' response was to shift ever further to the right.

The events of the last four months in particular are worth reviewing.

The last act of the Sanders campaign was the senator's vote for the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act on March 25. Prior to voting "yes" on the bill, Sanders hailed it on the Senate floor as a boon to workers. In reality, the bill was a boondoggle for corporate America that allowed for the funneling of \$6 trillion to keep the stock market afloat and cover any losses suffered by major corporations.

On April 8, as coronavirus cases in the US were reaching their first peak and hospitals were being overwhelmed, Sanders announced that he was dropping out of the race, and he held his groveling discussion with Biden on April 13.

His capitulation to Biden was followed by an interview

with the Associated Press in which he slandered as “irresponsible” any of his supporters who failed to campaign for Biden. Just a day earlier, Biden had signed on to Trump’s “back-to-work” campaign, as the US COVID-19 death toll reached 10,000.

Soon after, former top advisors to the Sanders campaign harnessed its organizational structure to launch a new super PAC, “Future to Believe In,” to direct resources to the election of Biden.

On May 23, as the US COVID-19 death toll was nearing 100,000 and the wealth of the super-rich was booming, Sanders’ political team issued a threat to his delegates: they would be removed from their positions if they criticized Biden or other Democratic Party leaders.

Two days later, George Floyd was brutally murdered by police, triggering massive multi-racial and multi-ethnic protests against police brutality across the US and around the world. In response to the protests, Trump attempted to carry out a coup, mobilizing active-duty troops to put down the protests and establish a presidential dictatorship.

In response to these developments, Sanders was silent. When he did finally address the situation, he called for police officers to receive a pay raise.

Now, as a direct result of the bipartisan policies of the government, the pandemic is spiraling out of control. This week over 375,000 coronavirus cases were reported in the United States, more than the number of cases reported in February, March and the first week of April combined. Workers are waiting in lines for over five hours in states like Florida and Arizona just to receive tests. Many states are nearing ICU bed capacity. And over 1.3 million people filed for unemployment for the first time last week, the 15th week in a row that new unemployment claims have been above 1 million and more than six times the number who newly filed this week last year. On top of this, there is mounting pressure for schools to pursue a reckless reopening in the fall and massive resistance brewing among key sections of the industrial working class.

It is under these conditions that Sanders has chosen to release his so-called “unity” proposals.

Sanders' actions express his political function. To keep social opposition within the framework of the Democratic Party. As the WSWS wrote in February 2016: “Sanders aims not to create a ‘revolution,’ as he asserts in his campaign speeches, but to prevent one.”

There were countless groups in and around the Democratic Party, most notably the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), who have spent the last five years

promoting illusions in the Sanders campaign. Since the ending of his campaign, the DSA has held dozens of “call-in” meetings to urge workers and young people not to leave the Democratic Party. “Eventually” they explain, such a break will be needed, “but not now.” In the bankruptcy of the Sanders campaign they exposed their own bankruptcy as well.

Workers and young people have to draw the necessary lessons from the Sanders experience. It is not, at its root, a question of proving the bankruptcy of Sanders as an individual, but more fundamentally, the bankruptcy of the political perspective he represents, one of reformism. Every advanced capitalist country has its own variety of Sanders. In Great Britain there is Corbynism, in Greece there was the experience of Syriza, and in Spain, Podemos.

The attitude of the SEP toward the Sanders campaign, and its cousins around the world is based on a scientific, historically-grounded Marxist analysis that proceeds not from what political tendencies or individuals say about themselves, but from their history and program and the class interests they represent.

The only way forward for the working class is on the basis of a genuinely revolutionary policy—not a “political revolution” to promote the Democratic Party, but a socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism.

The Socialist Equality Party is running its own presidential campaign to elect Joseph Kishore and Norissa Santa Cruz for president and vice president of the United States. We are running our campaign in order to bring our program and international perspective to the widest possible numbers of working people and young people, both in the United States and worldwide. We call on all workers and young people to join this campaign and support this fight.

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To contact the WSWS and the
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