

BERNIE SANDERS AND THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



Big shocks are in store for US and world capitalism, which will lead to even greater hardship for the workers and youth. Cuts and austerity for the majority and unimaginable wealth for the minority is the “new normality.” Anger is building in response to the shocking inequality, low wages, sexism, homophobia, racism, and police brutality. People are sick and tired of the status quo, and the general population is shifting to the left. However, there is no mass political party of, by, and for the working class through which to express this radicalization. With a historically weakened left, without a clear lead by the labor leaders, and in the absence of an existing labor party, the political vacuum on the left is inevitably filled in a distorted way by liberals and both left and right populists.

Until Bernie Sanders announced his candidacy, the 2016 election looked like it was going to be merely “more of the same”—quite possibly another Clinton vs. another Bush—and tens of thousands of Americans have responded enthusiastically. His call for “Scandinavian-style socialism,” his speeches against the “billionaire class,” and his call for a “political revolution” resonate with millions of people. He is putting forward ideas and words that have not been part of mainstream politics for decades. This raises important questions for everyone who believes that a better world is possible.

First off, we should be clear: the Democratic Party is neither democratic, nor is it a party, like the Republicans, it is controlled by “the billionaire class.” The millions of people who vote for it, for lack of an alternative, have zero say in its policies or direction. Despite Obama’s promises, US troops remain in Iraq and Afghanistan, Guantanamo prison is still open, the Employee Free Choice Act did not pass, many Bush-era tax cuts for the rich remain in place, and far from universal healthcare, we have a massive government handout to the insurance giants who are making more money than ever.

Some argue that Sanders’ run as a Democrat is positive, as it will force Hillary Clinton to the left to outflank him. However, pushing capitalist politicians and parties marginally to the left should not be our aim. Our aim should be to actually win political power for the working class majority. Hillary Clinton and the entire Democratic Party establishment have been carefully cultivated by the capitalist class to represent their interests. Capitalist politicians are not accountable to the voters, but to the big corporations. Under capitalism, “money talks and politicians listen.”

Just imagine the effect if Sanders had instead run as an independent, calling on the labor leaders to break with the Democrats and to build a mass political party based on the unions, armed with a clear socialist program. Such a campaign could establish roots throughout the country, lay-

ing the groundwork for a new party and future electoral campaigns, as well as helping to organize trade union and social struggles. It could begin the process of creating a new leadership for workers and youth. Unfortunately, this is not the path Sanders chose.

As for his program, Bernie seems to think that if we could just regulate capitalism a little more and get the ultra-rich to pay a little more in taxes, we could fund more social programs and provide free healthcare and education. However, the rich are not going to stand idly by and watch their system be legislated out of existence by executive decree. To win genuine socialism will require more than a vote for an individual on election day. It will require years of hard-fought collective struggles by millions of workers and youth. It will require organization, enormous financial and social resources, and lots of determination and patience.

Socialism is not capitalism plus a few reforms. It is a fundamentally different system that builds on the technological and productive advances humanity has collectively developed. Under capitalism, a handful of private owners get to keep the surplus wealth which the working class produces. Under socialism, the workers would collectively manage this surplus wealth, and use it to satisfy human needs, not to enrich the 1%. To take humanity to the next level, to unleash the enormous economic and human potential that capitalism wastes, we must bring the key levers of the economy—the top 500 companies—into public ownership, to be democratically administered in the interests of the whole of society.

Despite these limitations in Sanders’ strategy and program, we welcome the fact that many people will draw increasingly advanced conclusions as their attempts to reform capitalism and the Democrats from within are revealed as dead ends. Life and experience are the best teachers, and many bitter experiences are ahead, no matter how well or badly Sanders ends up doing.

Ultimately, we believe that a worldwide revolution is necessary. A revolution is when the masses of ordinary people begin to take their destinies into their own hands, no longer content to allow the rich and powerful to control politics and the economy. In a true democracy, the majority should rule in all aspects of life! But in order to succeed, we need a revolutionary party with deep roots in the working class and a clear program that can fundamentally transform the way society is structured: a revolutionary socialist program.

The International Marxist Tendency fights for socialism in the US and around the world. We invite all those interested in learning more to contact us to discuss how we can work together to build a better future.

Fight for a labor party! Fight for revolution! Fight for socialism!

OUR PROGRAM: WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

FOR A MASS PARTY OF LABOR BASED ON THE UNIONS—BREAK WITH THE DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS:

Only organized labor has the numbers and resources to effectively challenge the bosses' parties. For a militant, class independent, socialist program to fight against the attacks of big business. By fighting for the working class majority at the polls, in the workplace, and on the streets, such a party could quickly become a mass force and turn American politics upside down.

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, UNION REPRESENTATION, AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR ALL WORKERS:

Repeal all antiunion laws including Taft-Hartley. End compulsory arbitration and the victimization of trade unionists and those forming new unions. Organize the unorganized. Mobilize the rank and file and unite the labor movement to fight back against the bosses. No to concessions! For trade union democracy. All union officials to be regularly elected with the right of immediate recall by the membership. All officials to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

FULL EMPLOYMENT:

No to layoffs. Thirty hours work for forty hours pay. The right to a secure, full-time job, full benefits, or a place in education. Job security for all temporary workers and interns with equal pay and treatment. For a massive program of useful public works to create quality union jobs to rebuild our infrastructure. For a national minimum wage of at least \$25 per hour. Wages to be tied to inflation through periodic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). For union control over hiring and firing. Establish union-controlled job training and hiring halls in communities with high unemployment. Voluntary retirement at age 55 with full benefits. No to the privatization of Social Security.

SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL:

End homelessness. For an immediate moratorium on evictions. For the nationalization of foreclosed and vacant homes, to be allocated to those in need under democratic workers' and community control, with residents of foreclosed properties allowed to stay in their homes. No compensation to the foreclosing owners, except in cases of proven need. Rent for all housing, including Section 8 and government-owned housing, to be fixed at not more than 10 percent of wages, as part of a voluntary, national plan for housing.

UNIVERSAL QUALITY HEALTH CARE:

For a socialized, national health care system. Free scientific research from the profit motive. Full access for all to the latest medical technology, treatments, and discoveries. Massively fund research for

cures and treatment of AIDS, cancer, and other diseases. Nationalize the health insurance companies, the medical equipment and pharmaceutical industries, the mega-hospital systems and related clinics, and integrate them into a single state-owned and democratically managed and administered health provider.

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:

Fully fund and expand our public schools, colleges, and universities. End corporate encroachment into the classroom. No to means testing, vouchers, charter schools, and privatization. No to "Race to the Top" and "No Child Left Behind." Abolish tuition fees and forgive student loans. Provide living grants and paid internships to all students. Nationalize the private universities and colleges and merge them into one united public system of higher education. For lifelong learning for all from the cradle to the grave.

OUTLAW ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION—EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL:

Equal pay for work of equal value. Full paid leave for expectant mothers after the 1st trimester; parental leave with full pay for up to two years after birth or adoption. Free and safe, quality after-school programs and childcare facilities in the workplace. Affordable public laundry services and subsidized restaurants serving healthy, quality food to help free working women from domestic servitude. Full reproductive rights up to and including abortion. No to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, gender identity, and expression. Defend our civil liberties from attacks in the name of the "war on terror." For genuine freedom of expression. Nationalize the means of communication, and democratize access to the media and the use of public meeting spaces on the basis of proportional representation.

NO TO RACISM, PROFILING, AND POLICE BRUTALITY:

No to racist and antiworker police, courts, and laws. End the phony war on drugs in the U.S. and internationally. Abolish the death penalty and release all political prisoners. For the immediate and unconditional legalization of all undocumented immigrants. Full rights and amnesty for immigrant workers and their families. End all racist immigration and asylum controls. For the right of residency and dual citizenship. For the right to speak one's own language. Access to Social Security with equal benefits for all. No to "guest worker" programs. For family reunification and an immediate end to raids and deportations. No to border walls, militarization, and repression on the border. For the unity of the working class: mobilize the labor movement to combat racism and discrimination and to improve conditions for all workers.

A SOCIALIZED PLAN OF PRODUCTION FOR AGRICULTURE:

Nationalize the food distribution and agrichemical giants that destroy farmers' livelihoods and endanger public health in the pursuit of profit. A democratic plan of food production would protect small farmers' and agricultural workers' jobs and security. Fully fund nutrition assistance and extension programs. Full union rights for all agricultural workers.

ACTION TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND JOBS:

For public ownership and control over natural resources—the land, major industries, mining and logging companies, transport, oil, gas, and other energy—to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all. Environmental plans would be measured in generations, not fiscal quarters. Free and efficient public transportation for all.

NATIONALIZE THE KEY LEVERS OF THE ECONOMY: THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES, BANKS, AND CORPORATIONS:

No to austerity—make the rich pay for the crisis! Break with the irrational chaos of the capitalist free market. Nationalize the Fortune 500. No compensation to the millionaires, only to those in genuine need. All nationalized companies to be run under democratic workers' control and management, and integrated into a socialist plan of production to meet the needs of society. Consolidate the nationalized banks into a single, publicly owned and administered national bank to protect workers' savings and guarantee affordable loans to all.

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM:

End NAFTA, CAFTA, and pull out of the WTO and other bankers' deals that are the tools of imperialist exploitation. No to the FTAA and the TPP. Abolish the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and write off the debts imposed by Wall Street and imperialism. For international economic cooperation based on the interests of working people, not a handful of multinationals. No to the war on working people at home and abroad. Cut the military budget and invest instead in social needs. No to militarism and intervention in the Middle East and around the world: withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan now! End the embargo on Cuba. Hands off Latin America! Unite with Canadian and Latin American workers in a socialist federation of the Americas as part of a world socialist federation.

**SOCIALIST
APPEAL**

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