



From “Political Revolution” to Collaboration: Sanders and Warren Pledge to Work with Trump

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Two political processes are taking place simultaneously in the United States.

First, President-elect Trump is rapidly assembling a staff that will direct a government of the extreme right, expressed most significantly in the announcement that Breitbart News head Stephen Bannon will serve as his chief strategist. This places a man with well-known connections to racist and fascist organizations in a position of vast power in a future Trump administration.

This action is all the more sinister given that Trump, in an interview aired on “60 Minutes” on Sunday night, not only stated his intention to proceed with the deportation of three million undocumented immigrants, but also announced that he would stack the courts with open opponents of abortion rights and may seek the prosecution of his opponent in the election, Hillary Clinton.

Second, ignoring these developments, the Democratic Party and the media blithely act as if nothing unusual is taking place. They are seeking to normalize a government the likes of which has never been seen in American history. Following Tuesday’s election, President Obama told Trump he would do “everything we can to help you succeed.” Hillary Clinton made a similar pledge, saying she hoped Trump would be a “successful president for all Americans.”

This exercise in political surrender to the extreme right has found its most deplorable and disgusting expression in the response of Bernie Sanders in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* on Sunday and a subsequent television interview on CBS’s “Face the Nation.” Sanders has gone from proclaiming that he is leading a “political revolution” against the “billionaire class,” to capitulating ignominiously to Clinton, to pledging to work with Donald Trump.

In the *Times* piece, Sanders declares: “President-elect Trump is right. The American people want change. But what kind of change will he be offering them? Will he have the courage to stand up to the most powerful people in this country who are responsible for the economic pain that so many working families feel, or will he turn the anger of the majority against minorities, immigrants, the poor and the helpless?”

On “Face the Nation,” Sanders said that to the extent Trump seeks “to create a better life for working people, we will work with him issue by issue.” Speaking directly to Trump, he said, “You talked about being the champion of the working families—all right, now produce. Your rhetoric was great, now do something.”

Sanders' entire position is absurd. There is no question as to what Trump represents and the type of government he will lead. He is committed to slashing corporate taxes, eliminating regulations, cutting social programs, intensifying the assault on the working class, vastly expanding the military and destroying what remains of democratic rights. To raise questions as to whether Trump will implement policies to "create a better life for working people" is to sow illusions while giving Trump time to prepare his reactionary government.

Sanders' prostration before Trump exposes both his boundless opportunism and the real purpose of his campaign in the Democratic Party primaries. If Sanders were at all serious, he would be warning the working class about the extreme dangers it confronts and making clear that he would neither accept nor collaborate with the incoming administration. He would be pointing to the fact that Trump lost the popular vote as proof that he has no mandate to implement any of the policies he is preparing.

Beyond political prostration, Sanders' proposed alliance with Trump is connected to a common economic agenda. During his primary campaign, Sanders urged the Democratic Party to adopt the nationalist and protectionist policies of Trump. He blamed the collapse of workers' living standards on globalization and trade deals, divorced from any critique of the capitalist system. This was aimed at directing the anger of workers in the United States at workers in China, Mexico and other countries, rather than against the giant corporations that exploit workers in every country.

These themes were echoed by the other leader of the "left" faction of the Democratic Party, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. In a statement released on Wednesday, Warren proclaimed that Trump has "promised to rebuild our economy for working people, and I offer to put aside our differences and work with him on that task."

In a speech Friday to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, meeting in Washington, Warren detailed possible points of agreement with the new Republican administration, particularly in opposing trade agreements and promoting economic nationalism. Her comments followed statements by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and United Auto Workers President Dennis Williams that the unions saw a "great opportunity," in the words of Williams, to "find some common ground" with Trump.

As this political repositioning is taking place, a third process is underway. In the streets, tens of thousands of demonstrators across the country are making clear that they have no doubt about what Trump represents. However, their anger and outrage find no expression within the political establishment, with top Democrats either remaining silent on the protests, acting to distance themselves, or expressing opposition.

The Democratic Party is a party of Wall Street no less than the Republicans. It is far more concerned with the consequences of stirring up opposition than it is with any tactical differences it has with the Republicans and Trump.

One of the basic problems in the demonstrations is that many of those participating still express illusions in the role of the Democratic Party. In fact, the Democratic Party—from Obama and Clinton to Sanders and Warren—bears political responsibility for the election of Trump, and it is now making clear that it is willing to work with him in implementing a policy of war abroad and reaction at home.

In the coming months, popular anger will grow, as workers, including those who voted for

Trump, come to realize what they confront. Opposition to Trump cannot be organized through or in alliance with the Democratic Party, but only in a ruthless and uncompromising break with it and all of its political agents, and with the capitalist system they defend.

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