

United States — Now Its Biden vs Sanders : Democratic Primary Elections

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NOTE : It is too early to see what the impact of the corona virus pandemic will have on the Democratic primary elections. One election, in Ohio, was canceled on March 16, and others will be canceled in upcoming primaries. When, or if, they will be rescheduled is not known. The pandemic is having a big negative impact on the economy in the U.S. and the world. It is possibly coinciding with a cyclical downturn. What the full impact on the economy and what this will mean for the elections, including the general election, remains to be seen. What appears below concerns where the primaries stand as of the March 16 elections.

The race for the Democratic Party nomination for president took a sharp turn in the March primary elections. Joe Biden, whose campaign had been lagging, suddenly emerged as the front-runner.

The reason for this turnaround in Biden's fortunes is that the Democratic Party establishment rallied around him at the expense of three other candidates - Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, and Michael Bloomberg — who were vying with him to be the establishment candidate.

After Biden won big in the South Carolina primary on February 29, these three dropped out of the race and endorsed Biden, who went on to win most of the 20 primaries held on March 3 and 10 and the remaining three on March 16. Biden now has a decisive lead.

It should be noted that there were two billionaires running, Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer, who financed their own campaigns, and bought ads appearing many times a day on major TV outlets. (Steyer also dropped out without endorsing anyone.) Bloomberg spent around a half billion dollars promoting himself, about .8 percent of his fortune. These facts alone should make anyone realize the dismal state of capitalist politics in the U.S.

The press described the Democratic establishment candidates as "moderates," implying that they were in between the right and left wings of the Democrats. But there were no candidates to the right of them - they were the right wing of the Democratic candidates, as opposed to the "progressives" Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

Warren has also dropped out without endorsing anyone, leaving only Biden and Sanders competing for the Democratic nomination.

Much of the media labels Sanders a socialist. But Sanders emphatically repudiates social ownership of the means of production, the historical socialist position.

In a long speech he gave detailing his position when he was running in the 2015 Democratic primaries, he begins with a long and gushing tribute to President Franklin Roosevelt and his "New Deal" and concluded :

"He redefined the relationship of the federal government to the people of our country. He combatted

cynicism, fear and despair. He reinvigorated democracy. He transformed the country. And that is what we have to do today.”

In this speech he also said : “So let me define for you, simply and straightforwardly, what democratic socialism means to me. It builds on what Franklin Delano Roosevelt said when he fought for guaranteed economic rights for all Americans.”

He explained : “So the next time you hear me attacked as a socialist, remember this, I don’t believe the government should own the means of production, but I do believe that the middle class and working families who produce the wealth of America deserve a fair deal. I believe in private companies that thrive and invest and grow in America instead of shipping jobs and profits overseas.”

One more thing to note in this speech. He endorsed NATO, the imperialist military alliance. [\[1\]](#)

Today Sanders continues to say he is a “New Deal” Democrat, in the mold of Franklin Roosevelt.

The current known as social democracy long ago dropped socialization of the means of production. Leaving aside those social democratic parties that have gone completely over to the enemy, implementing reactionary capitalist policies while in government, there are left social democrats who try to reform capitalism. They are best characterized as left liberals.

Commentators in the New York Times have recognized that Sanders is not a socialist, and the paper refers to him as a liberal.

Socialism is not on the ballot in the democratic primaries. Rather it is the Clintonite Biden on the right and the liberal Sanders on the left of the party. (Of course both are to the left of the extreme right Trump.)

This is not to say that the reforms Sanders advocates are not important, quite the contrary, and they should they be supported. They include proposals such as national health insurance for all, wiping out the vast student debt and more. “Medicare for All” takes on new urgency with the corona-19 virus pandemic, for example. Sanders does a service by popularizing these reforms.

But Sanders faces an uphill battle to win these reforms. First of all, the Democratic establishment, reflecting the decisive section of the ruling capitalist class, is opposed to Sanders and his reforms. Winning the Democratic nomination against the establishment and the major capitalist media which supports Biden is very difficult.

Even if Biden doesn’t reach a majority of the convention delegates, and Sanders is not too far behind, the “supper delegates” to the convention, some 770 — composed of Democratic elected officials, members of the Democratic National Committee and its staff, etc. — are almost all vociferously against Sanders according to a sampling conducted by the Times, and would put Biden over the top.

In the unlikely case that Sanders wins a majority of the delegates in the primaries, in which case under current rules the super delegates wouldn’t have a vote, he would become the Democratic candidate. If he won the general election against Trump, and the Democrats take back the Senate and retain the House, the majority of the Democrats in both houses would be establishment, and would block with the Republicans to shoot down Sanders’ reforms.

And even if they don’t, the Supreme Court, which is majority right wing, could declare them unconstitutional. Just recently, a lower court ruled that Trump’s forcing of thousands of asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while the courts very slowly consider their cases, is unconstitutional.

Trump appealed to the Supreme Court, which sided with Trump and overturned the lower court.

Let us consider possibility that the majority if the ruling class could be won over to support the kinds of reforms Sanders proposes. After all, major reforms of capitalism were won in the 1930s under Franklin Roosevelt (much more radical for the times than Sanders'). But at that time there was a massive labor radicalization and upsurge that rebuilt the union movement into a powerful force that Roosevelt could not ignore.

Moreover, the U.S. and the major capitalist powers were in a depression while the Soviet Union was making economic strides forward under the first Five Year Plans.

Today the unions have shrunk. Only 6 percent of workers in the private sector, including industry, are in unions. And most are led by class-collaborationist traitors and make concessions to the capitalists. The Soviet Union no longer exists. China has returned to capitalism. Thatcher scolded the world's masses with TINA - There Is No Alternative to capitalism.

It would take a new mass mobilization of the working class in the U.S. before the ruling class would even consider the modest reforms Sanders is proposing (Sanders himself says his reforms are not very radical, and he is right. But capitalist politics has moved so far to the right that they do seem radical.)

Such a mass mobilization would have to break with the illusion of reforming the capitalist and imperialist Democratic Party and form a worker's party that could implement such reforms, and then go beyond them.

Barry Sheppard

Notes

[1] For the full 2015 speech, see :

<https://www.vox.com/2015/11/19/9762028/bernie-sanders-democratic-socialism>