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Our Revolution or Our Capitulation?

Seeing Bernie Sanders sitting on camera side by side with Joe Biden, demanding nothing, made me want to... Bernie Sanders gave up without hardly a whimper! No wonder that many of his supporters are fuming and stating that they will not vote for Biden in November. See “Say It Ain’t So, Joe: The Latest Neoliberal from the War and Wall Street Party,” (CounterPunch, March 20, 2019), for an assessment of Biden’s neoliberal history that would give any leftist or liberal pause before casting a vote for him.

The energy spent by the grassroots movement to support Sanders’ two candidacies in 2016 and 2020 was labor intensive. Millions gave millions of dollars and time on the phone and on the streets. What was the “payoff” from all of this? From where I sit in the Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts, it was a slap in the face.

Even staffers like Briahna Joy Gray got a lecture from Bernie about supporting the neoliberal Biden (“Sanders warns his loyalists it would be ‘irresponsible’ not to support Biden,” Guardian, April 15, 2020):

On Tuesday night, Sanders criticized his own supporters many of whom have so far resisted his vow to do whatever it takes to help Biden win the presidency.

He seemed to distance himself from his campaign’s former national press secretary, Briahna Joy Gray, when asked about her recent statement on social media about refusing to endorse Biden.

‘She is my former press secretary – not on the payroll,’ Sanders noted. A spokesman later clarified that all campaign staffers were no longer on the payroll as of Tuesday, though they will get a severance check in May.

Keep in mind that Sanders’ endorsement of Biden comes only two days after a neatly hidden article (hidden in the sense that it was published on Easter Sunday) about the allegations of Tara Reade that she had been sexually assaulted by then Senator Biden in 1993 (“Examining Tara Reade’s Sexual Assault Allegation Against Joe Biden,” New York Times, April 14, 2020).

Tara Reade’s allegations seem believable. She reported the incident to others following the incident and later, and she has suffered trauma in ways that are commonly reflected in this kind of assault.

Even a casual observer has to weigh in on the insensitivity involved in endorsing someone like Biden when this most serious of allegations was made. A few days following Bernie Sanders grand capitulation, Elizabeth Warren followed suit, saying she would accept the office of vice president if asked by Biden. Left sufficiently reeling from these pronouncements of falling into line with neoliberalism, one wonders if anything political is sacred to these people? Certainly, integrity is not one of those scared values!

When will those on the political left learn that electoral politics in the US is a zero-sum “game?” The liberal Vice President, Henry Wallace, was dropped from the Democratic ticket in 1944, as he was getting too close for comfort to the serious corridors of power. Lyndon Johnson blindsided the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the Democratic Convention in 1964. Hubert Humphrey dragged the Democratic Party to certain defeat in 1968, as he refused to take a bold stand against the Vietnam War and break with Lyndon Johnson. In 1972, antiwar progressive George McGovern won the Democratic Party nomination, and because of his defeat those with the levers of power in the Democratic Party vowed that another liberal candidate would get nowhere near the presidency. The latter became obvious through the neoliberal Clinton’s nomination by the Democrats in 2016 and her loss at the polls. The Democrats would rather lose electorally and continue as lapdogs of the power elite.

The political left has always told us so when we venture into liberal and neoliberal electoral politics. They’ve told us we will be burned. The Democrats will always siphon all of the energy of its left/liberal constituents and then leave us with nothing! What really

galls this time, however, is seeing our standard bearer, so vocal on meaningful issues on the campaign trail, sitting side by side with Biden and looking like a well-trained lapdog!

I interviewed two groups of Sanders' supporters with video interviews at a rally in Albany, New York and at a Sanders' campaign office in Torrington, Connecticut, in April 2016. Both groups of young adults were knowledgeable about the issues in the campaign and both groups' idealism struck me. Now I wonder, with so little idealism remaining in a spoiled and fallen political climate, where do those with high ideals and lots of energy go?

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