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As anti-Trump protests spread, Democrats scramble to contain opposition

Barry Grey

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Protests against the incoming Trump administration continued to spread throughout the United States on Wednesday. High school students and youth have come to the fore in the anti-Trump movement, staging walk-outs against plans to deport millions of immigrants and Trump's appointment of the fascist provocateur Stephen Bannon as his chief political adviser and strategist.

On Wednesday, students from at least six high schools and two universities in Miami-Dade County, Florida walked out to demand that their communities be declared "sanctuary cities," where authorities refuse to carry out deportation orders against immigrants. Students at two high schools in San Diego also walked out of class. This follows walkouts earlier this week by thousands of students in Washington, D.C., New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, Denver and other cities.

These protests point to the development of a significant political movement in the United States. An entire generation of youth is becoming radicalized by the coming to power of the most right-wing government in American history.

Since losing the popular vote by over 1 million votes but securing the Electoral College last week, Trump has reaffirmed his war on immigrants, pledged to fill the vacant seat on the

Supreme Court with an anti-abortion zealot and made clear he will pack his cabinet with law-and-order reactionaries and warmongers.

In the face of growing opposition to Trump, top Democratic Party officials continue to preach accommodation and “unity.” Newly elected Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer said Wednesday that Senate Democrats were “ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with Republicans, working with soon-to-be President Trump on issues where we agree.”

Vice President Joe Biden gave the incoming administration his full support, telling reporters Wednesday after meeting with Vice President-elect Mike Pence that he's “confident on day one everything will be in good hands.” Biden said he would be available “24-7” to advise Pence after he takes office.

Hillary Clinton, in her first public appearance since her concession speech last week, spoke for 20 minutes at a conference of the Children’s Defense Fund without mentioning either Trump or the mass protests against him.

At the same time, a section of the Democratic Party leadership is making criticisms of Trump in an attempt to restore the shattered credibility of the Democratic Party and contain the growth of social opposition. Predictably, this effort is being led by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren.

Sanders called for a fundamental reassessment of the Democratic Party and gave what was billed as a major speech on the incoming Trump administration Wednesday night at George Washington University. It turned out to be an elaboration of the conciliatory statements he had made over the weekend.

Sanders listed a series of demagogic promises Trump made during the campaign to capture the votes of economically distressed workers, and said it remained an open question whether he would make good on them.

“The first thing that will be resolved,” he declared, is “whether he was hypocritical or sincere, and we will find that out soon enough.” As though there were any doubt that the new government would intensify the attacks on the working class!

“What you will see on Capitol Hill,” he continued, “is that many Democrats will be prepared to work with Mr. Trump if he turns out to be sincere about the promises that he made.”

Warren, for her part, sent a letter to Trump dated Tuesday criticizing him for packing his transition team with bankers and Wall Street figures. She wrote: “The American people are watching to see if you were sincere in your campaign promises to look out for the interests of working families, rather than the interests of the rich and powerful. Now it is time to live up to those promises.”

Warren’s indignation toward Wall Street is selective. Only a few days before she was making campaign speeches for Clinton, a multi-millionaire candidate who had received the vast majority

of Wall Street campaign funding and been paid tens of millions of dollars in speaking fees by the big banks.

Neither Warren, nor Sanders mentioned the anti-Trump protests taking place across the country.

To the extent that there is content to the overtures by Sanders and Warren to work with the Trump administration, supposedly to improve the lot of workers, it is agreement with Trump's program of economic nationalism and trade war, with which the trade union bureaucracy has also publicly solidarized itself. This is a reactionary policy to pit American workers against workers in other countries and line them up behind their "own" bosses.

This empty posturing is designed to politically disarm the working class and youth as to the immense dangers they face from a Trump government and, above all, keep social opposition and protest within the confines of the Democratic Party.

Workers and young people must not be fooled again! In the Democratic Party primaries, Sanders won the votes of millions of workers and young people because of his calls for a "political revolution" against the "billionaire class." As the WSWS warned, Sanders did not speak for the interests of the working class, but for a section of the ruling class that was seeking to divert anger over falling living standards and rising economic inequality would not take an independent political and anti-capitalist form.

By throwing his support to the Wall Street favorite Clinton, Sanders ensured that anti-establishment sentiment among large sections of working people would be captured by the right. Now, as opposition is developing against Trump, Sanders is again being called forward to corral opposition.

Significantly, Sanders has been promoted into the leadership of the Democratic caucus in the Senate. Warren, already in the leadership, has been elevated to become its co-chair. The Democratic Party is seeking to give itself a face-lift even as it moves further to the right.

All attempts to present this party of Wall Street and the military/intelligence complex as capable of being "pushed to the left" and made to serve the interests of working people are fraudulent. The most basic and critical lesson of the Trump election is the urgent need for the working class and youth to carry out a complete break with the Democratic Party and take the road of independent political struggle against the capitalist system that both parties defend.