

CBS Mornings

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7:34:46 a.m. [TEASE]

18 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Senator Bernie Sanders]

TONY DOKOUPIL: Bernie Sanders, the senator, he's been in makeup about 90 minutes now. He is getting the hair just right to come on to talk about his new book, *Oligarchy*, and the government shutdown, and what Democrats are doing wrong and his message after the No Kings protests drew hundreds of thousands all across the country. You're watching — there he is, looking good — *CBS Mornings*. Hi, Senator!

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7:39:28 a.m.

6 minutes and 17 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Sen. Bernie Sanders on Government Shutdown]

DOKOUPIL: We are, if you've forgotten, in day 20 of a federal government shutdown, and both sides are dug in. Democrats are demanding action on health care before they vote to reopen the government. On Saturday, millions of Americans meanwhile filled the streets in thousands of cities and towns for the No Kings protests against President Trump and his administration. Independent Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont told protesters in Washington that mega billionaires are hijacking, in his words, America's democracy. That's the message of his new book, *Fight Oligarchy*, inspired by a nationwide tour earlier this year and the senator joins me right now. Senator, thank you very much for being here.

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS (I-VT): Thank you very much for having me.

DOKOUPIL: A lot of advisers say oligarchy is a technical abstract term. You shouldn't use it. But you make the case for it. I want to get to the book, but first on the shutdown. Senator Thune has said — Leader Thune over the Senate has said the health care issues will come to a vote if you open the government first. He can't guarantee the outcome but he'll get the vote. Why is that no good?

SANDERS: Well, I'll tell you why it is no good. The current health care system is broken. It's dysfunctional. We spend twice as much per person as the people of other country, 85 million uninsured, we don't have enough doctors, nurses, dentists, et cetera. It is a broken system. What Trump did in his big beautiful bill is to throw 15 million low income and working class people off the health care they currently have by massive cuts in Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. You know what studies show, guys? Let's talk about this. Studies show that, when you throw 15 million low income and working class people off health care, 50,000 people a year — a year —, will die unnecessarily. They don't have the money to go to a doctor, they have a chronic illness,

they will die. On top of that, all over the country, in my state of Vermont, all over the country, people right now are receiving notices from their insurance companies, their premiums are going to go up by 20 percent — by — by double.

DOKOUPIL: So open the government and vote on it. Make the case.

SANDERS: Really? No, and let 50,000 people die after Trump vetoes the legislation if the House doesn't deal with the legislation? You know what's going on right now in the House? The Speaker of the House, Mr. Johnson, has given his people a five-week vacation. They're not even in Washington, D.C. before I vote on a bill that will right now allow 50,000 people to die unnecessarily, I want it absolutely clear that that will not happen, period.

DOKOUPIL: Meantime, you could have got — I mean, the President is saying the shutdown is a chance for Republicans to cut programs left and right that they don't like that you like. So, how long are you willing to let this ride for losses?

SANDERS: Look, I cannot allow, in good conscience, 50,000 people a year to die unnecessarily, and in my state and all over this country health care premiums — you think you're paying enough out there right now? Look at doubling premiums for 20 million people, sometimes tripling and quadrupling.

DOKOUPIL: So, you don't think you can win a vote?

GAYLE KING: But how do we get out with both sides blaming the other? Still nobody's talking.

NATE BURLESON: Yeah. They're just pointing the finger.

KING: I think that's — I think that's what is frustrating to everybody because everybody making the decisions are getting paid while the employees — the workers are going without. Somebody has to say get together and talk.

SANDERS: Well, it might help, Gayle, if the House of Representatives brought their people back. They're on vacation right now. Pretty hard to negotiate with people who on vacation and I think just to talk a little bit about the Senate process. Now, in the House majority rules — in the Senate, you need 60 votes.

KING: Right.

SANDERS: Republicans have 53.

KING: 53.

SANDERS: They need to negotiate. You know how much negotiations they've done? Zero. Our way or the highway. Unprecedented.

KING: Can we talk about No Kings protest this week?

SANDERS: Sure.

KING: How do you translate all of that passion into action, into votes?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Sen. Bernie Sanders on “No Kings” Protests]

SANDERS: Great question and that is exactly what we’re working on. We are right now working to help thousands and thousands of people begin the process of running for office, maybe at the state legislature, city council, for school board, getting people involved in the political process. It is something we are doing right now. We are supporting great candidates all over this country. I think the American people are sick and tired — and by the way, getting back to the shutdown, let’s put this on the line. Why did Trump and his friends throw 15 million people off health care and double premiums? You know why? To give a trillion dollars in tax breaks to Elon Musk, Mr. Bezos and the billionaire class. Anyone in America think it makes sense? Not me.

BURLESON: Now, let’s get back to one of the major themes of the book. You talk about the Democratic Party and how the “turned its back on the needs and suffering of the American working class.” So, what do we need to do moving forward? What does the Democratic Party need to do moving forward?

SANDERS: That’s what we’re doing right now. What the Democratic Party has got to do is make a very simple decision. I do not believe that most working class people who voted for Trump said, boy, I want to give a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the one percent. They didn’t to say, hmm, let’s throw 15 million people including many of us off of the health care they had. They voted because they did not see a strong alternative. Here’s the reality.

DOKOUPIL: Let’s hear it.

SANDERS: Over the last 52 years real inflation adjusted for wages for the average American worker have not gone up.

DOKOUPIL: Politifact says that’s untrue, gone up 11 percent.

SANDERS: No, Politifact is — I stand by what we said.

DOKOUPIL: Okay.

SANDERS: 52 years ago compared to today, real weekly inflation accounted for wages — but just think, all of the increases in worker productivity, right? All of the technology, working class in this country is going nowhere and, in all likelihood, our kids will have a lower standard of living than we do.

DOKOUPIL: So why — why are Democrats, to put a fine point on it, right, two out of three

Americans have an unfavorable view of the party you caucus with.

SANDERS: Yes.

DOKOUPIL: How did that happen?

SANDERS: I will tell you.

DOKOUPIL: Why do they not like you and trust you right now?

SANDERS: Well, I think independents are a different story than Democrats. But right now, I think the answer is people are looking around them. Can they afford health care? No. What have the Democrats done about that? Not a whole lot. Can their kids afford to go to child care? Well, no, child care is outrageously expensive. What about housing, how are we doing on housing? Nobody in America can afford housing right now. Housing costs are astronomical. You want to get your kids to eat decent food and not junk food so they don't become obese? Go to the grocery store. Find out how much it costs for decent quality food. What about rural Americas? Hospitals are shutting down. So, this country faces many crises and I think a lot of working class people said, look, Trump is crazy, he lies all the time but at least he is going to do something. Where are the Democrats? And the Democrats have to make a very fundamental decision, do you stand with the struggling working class? 60 percent of whom are living paycheck to paycheck, trying to survive. Are you prepared to take on the oligarchy, the Musks and Bezos who never had it so good? Live in a society where the top one percent owns more wealth than the bottom 93 percent. Those are the issues to put on the table and fight for.

DOKOUPIL: Senator, you always bring an affirmative case, that is true. A lot of Democrats don't and you — you say what you want to happen and it's all in the book. People should pick it up.

BURLESON: Yeah, Senator Sanders, thank you so much. We appreciate you. *Fight Oligarchy* is out now as an e-book and it will be available in print tomorrow.