

A reply to US Green Party supporters

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Two letters sent to the *World Socialist Web Site* in response to our June 27 article “US Green Party candidate Ralph Nader courts Buchanan supporters” (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/jun2000/gp1-j27.shtml>) warrant detailed replies, not, as will become clear, because they have any intrinsic political or intellectual merit.

Rather these letters from supporters of the Green Party reflect in tone and content the outlook of at least a significant section of those active in the organization. The emails, which were received the same day our article was posted, denounced the WSWs for its criticism of the Green Party and its presidential candidate Ralph Nader. (The full texts of the letters are linked to this reply).

In the first letter, reader MH begins, “Your article was stupid and uninformed. People opposing China in WTO are not anti-Chinese people, they are anti-Chinese totalitarian government & anti-US corporations having license to exploit Chinese workers.”

Here MH echoes those, including the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and organizations such as the Christian fundamentalist Family Research Council, who have lined up with right-wing politicians like Patrick Buchanan against the normalization of trade with China. To a man they deny any animus toward the Chinese.

But why was China singled out? MH says the reason is the repressive regime in Beijing. In that case, why are the Greens not campaigning against trade with Turkey, which has a notorious record of internal repression and violence against its Kurdish population? Why do not the Greens call for an end to normal trade relations with Israel, in protest against that country's treatment of the Palestinians? What about Peru, whose autocratic president stole the recent elections?

In fact, human rights concerns are a smokescreen thrown up by those leading the campaign against trade with China. It has far more to do with the longstanding campaign of Southern textile bosses like Richard Milliken, as well as the steel companies and other sections of US industry, against Chinese imports. Such economic interests are concealed behind Cold War-style anticommunism, misdirected in as much as the Beijing government is not a socialist regime, but rather a variety of Stalinism.

MH throws in for good measure opposition to the exploitation

of Chinese workers by US corporations. This is another red herring. US corporations brutally exploit workers all over the world, including within the US. But the Green Party explicitly rejects the struggle for socialism and defends the existing property relations of capitalism. Is MH suggesting an end to all trade and investment by American corporations around the world?

The campaign against the normalization of trade with China is based on the politics of economic nationalism and American chauvinism. A major aim of those involved is to channel the anger of working people in America over economic insecurity away from the American ruling class and its political representatives, and direct it against workers in other countries.

This is confirmed in the next line of MH's letter, in which he defends the Greens' policy of blocking Mexican truck drivers from entering the US. He says of allowing Mexicans to drive their trucks across the border, “...if that's not a formula for massive wage reductions, what is?”

MH wants us to believe that Nader's position on Mexican truck drivers (which is a transparent attempt to solicit the support of the Teamsters union bureaucracy) implies no animus towards Mexican workers. But he himself indulges in a bit of demagoguery that amounts to an incitement of US workers against their Mexican counterparts.

MH continues: “One can agree with Buchanan on WTO & NAFTA without endorsing other views of his. On abortion, etc. Or is that distinction too hard for you to make?”

MH writes as though agreement with Buchanan on economic nationalism were of no greater significance than one's position on a host of other issues. In fact, nationalism is a fundamental question of political orientation, which ultimately reflects the class interests for which an individual or party speaks. The embrace by Nader and the Greens of economic nationalism is an adaptation to the global interests of American capitalism. Given the fact that the US is the preeminent imperialist power in the world, American nationalism inevitably takes on a particularly aggressive and militaristic coloration.

MH's attempt to isolate Buchanan's trade policy from his ultra-right opposition to abortion and his fascistic leanings in general only reveals a lack of theoretical consistency and political principle, which is the hallmark, not only of the Greens, but all such petty-bourgeois organizations. In these groups, people with the most disparate views can coexist with one another on

the basis of opportunism and political expediency. The outcome of such methods has been demonstrated by the Greens in Germany, who joined the government and directly participated in NATO's war against Yugoslavia.

MH concludes: "Nor does Nader need to have a position on Mumia." Why is that? Because "Nader needs to reach out to reasonable conservatives & others & if that's not PC enough for you, tough."

MH apparently is unaware of the depths of his own political cynicism. Otherwise he would hardly admit that he views the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a political prisoner on death row for nearly two decades, as small change when compared to the Greens' political aspirations. If, in order for the Greens to improve their image in conservative and right-wing circles, they have to sacrifice the life of this political prisoner—and abandon any serious struggle against capital punishment—so be it!

Such is the content of MH's attack on the WSWS. As for the tone of his letter, it exudes the kind of posturing at *real politik* that is typical of a certain milieu of "leftists" who have, in fact, no fundamental differences with the Democratic Party.

The second letter was sent to the WSWS by GS in Arcata, California. It begins: "What's wrong with trying to move the Democratic Party to the left? I strongly disagree with the writer's assertion, in 'Nader Courts Buchanan Supporters' that 'this underscore[s] the highly superficial character of the organization's independence from the Democratic Party.'"

He then proceeds to confirm precisely our assertion that the Greens' independence from the Democrats is more apparent than real: "We naturally talk about trying to push the Democratic Party to the left and other such noble pursuits, as good reasons to vote for a candidate everyone knows isn't going to win the presidency."

In other words, the basic orientation of the Green Party is to act as a pressure group on the Democratic Party, not to lead a break from this capitalist party. The Greens make no analysis of the origins of the Democratic Party or the class interests it represents. Nor do they examine the economic and political processes that underlie the Democrats' shift to the right over the last 25 years.

GS obviously considers himself a proponent of political realism, as opposed to the hopeless idealism of the WSWS. But it is far more "realistic"—in the sense of pursuing an objectively attainable goal—to work systematically for the development of a politically conscious and independent socialist workers movement than to base one's efforts on the futile perspective of transforming one of the major parties of American capitalism into a force for progressive change. That endeavor is truly the political equivalent of alchemy, i.e., the attempt to turn lead into gold.

GS continues: "Your criticism of the Greens smacks of the tiresome motivation of ideological purity, which has been the bane of the left's existence in America. It has led to endless

backbiting and infighting, rather than coalition building; as long as it continues, it dooms the left to virtually no significant influence over the political process in the US."

This criticism is by no means new. Socialists who stand for the political independence of the working class and its international unity have always been branded as sectarians by muddle-headed reformists.

GS's appropriation of the designation "left" warrants critical scrutiny. If the term "left" implies opposition to the status quo from a revolutionary—or at least socially progressive—perspective, then one has every right to wonder whether the Green Party really merits such a designation. A party that embraces the economic nationalism of Patrick Buchanan, seeks an alliance with the Teamsters and AFL-CIO bureaucracy, and actively courts the support of right-wing elements can only hope to present itself as a party of the "left" in the absence of a genuine movement, embracing significant sections of the working population, of social and political opposition to capitalism. Such a movement will emerge, and it will be built in a struggle against the unprincipled and nationalist politics epitomized by the Greens.

GS concludes: "While the various splinter parties of the left fight over who is the most sincerely radical, the corporate duopoly continues right on dominating the political system."

Here arrogance and ignorance converge. The responsibility for the continuing domination of the capitalist parties in the US does not rest with socialists who have fought intransigently for the political independence of the working class—first and foremost, the Socialist Equality Party and its predecessor, the Workers League. Rather it is opportunist opponents of Marxism, many of whom find a natural home in the Green Party, who bear a major responsibility.



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