

An exchange on Ralph Nader's silence during the US election crisis

29 January 2001

The following exchange with a supporter of former Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader concerns the WSWS's November 24, 2000 article, "The US election crisis: why is Ralph Nader silent?"

Dear Editor:

Your editorial deserves comment, but not point-by-point refutation. Most of it is so obtuse and contrived as to be laughable, a thick-headed recapitulation of "lesser evilism", *ad nauseum*. In case you have forgotten, Mr. Nader lost the election. Why should he continue to beat a dead horse, especially now that the duopolists are making his argument for him? Is it news to anyone that both wings of the Republicrat duopoly have committed dirty tricks, fraud and civil rights violations? These things are their stock and trade. This latest incident is only one in a long line of betrayals. It is pure lunacy to presume that Ralph Nader, demonized, excoriated and all but banished from Washington DC by the "New Democrats," owes those reactionaries anything but a stiff upheld middle finger. His assessment of the impending deadlock between the Bush and Gore camps, based on a lack of a popular mandate, is absolutely correct, as history will inevitably prove.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans are in a mess of their own making, and it will contribute to an erosion of their reputations and influence—something that will benefit their opponents, including the Greens and those Socialists who, unlike the editorialist, refuse to play lackeys to the plutocratic regime. It is almost beyond belief that the writer of this drivel fails to see the evils of the WTO [World Trade Organization] and trade deals with dictatorships who use slave labor, but in such a tired and intellectually bankrupt piece, what should one expect?

And why single out Nader to be the finger-wagger on this issue? The *World Socialist Web Site* might well ask why David McReynolds and other candidates of the

various socialist parties aren't standing up on this issue, rather than blindly joining the chorus of Gore supporters in taking cheap shots at Nader. There are a lot of Socialists who see the Greens as natural allies. We should not be bashing one another over issues like this election debacle, which is after all not of our making.

DS

Dear reader,

Your comments on the WSWS article on Ralph Nader's silence on the post-election crisis are a combination of confusion, non sequiturs and serious misrepresentations of the position of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

You write that since Nader lost the election he has no reason to say anything about the present situation. Also that since Nader has been excoriated for daring to run against the Democrats, he "owes them nothing."

This makes no sense. Political struggle is not simply about winning, nor is it a vehicle for settling grudges or scores. It is not the Democrats who are owed anything by Nader, but his nearly three million voters, as well as tens of millions of other American working people. If Nader is serious about presenting an alternative to the capitalist two-party system (and he is not) he would seek and utilize every opportunity to speak out on important political issues as they arise.

You facetiously ask, "Why is David McReynolds silent?" I do not know whether McReynolds is silent, because his party has no regular publication. The vast majority of the population has never even heard of him. That does not mean that he has no responsibility, but the fact is that Nader received about 200 times as many votes as Socialist Party candidate McReynolds. Nader thus had an opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to have a serious impact on political discussion at a time when the attention of millions was turned to the

subject. He chose not to speak, for reasons which we have already explained.

In any case, while I cannot speak about McReynolds, it does appear that most of the middle class radical “left” in this country is utterly confused about the current political warfare. That is an important matter that is worthy of comment, but it in no way alters the significance of Nader's position.

The crux of your argument is that there was no difference at all between the Democratic and Republican campaigns, which you refer to as “Republicrat.” This may sound quite radical, but in fact it is nothing but an abstentionist refusal to deal with crucial political issues.

We don't need any lectures on the nature of the Democratic Party. It is Nader who has been a lifelong supporter of this party, and it was Nader, despite his claim that there was no difference between these two parties, who openly called during his campaign for utilizing his candidacy to push the Democrats to the left, and also to elect more “progressive” Democrats to Congress. Nader's anger toward the Democrats is the anger of a spoiled suitor, of someone pleading for his faithless lover to “come home.” We have no such illusions. We refused to support Nader not because he attacked the Democrats, but because he is not genuinely independent of this big business party.

At the same time we cannot and will not ignore the significance of the increasingly hysterical right-wing campaign of recent years seeking to delegitimize bourgeois democracy. The 1998-99 factional warfare launched by the Congressional Republicans, culminating in impeachment and now the stealing of the presidential elections by the Republican Party, confronts the American people with grave dangers. You suggest that recognizing these dangers and seeking to make our readers aware of them makes us “lackeys” of the Democratic Party. On the contrary, we are showing workers that they cannot defend their rights through this party. You are standing aside from this struggle, which amounts to a “radical” surrender to the ultra-right. As we have also pointed out, Nader's support for President Clinton's impeachment, his silence during the presidential election crisis and, worse, his silence on its undemocratic outcome indicate an orientation on his part to at least a section of the right-wing elements themselves.

As for our supposedly failing to see the evils of the World Trade Organization and deals with dictatorships who use slave labor, anyone who has read the *WSWS* will know that this is an outrageous falsehood. The *World Socialist Web Site* has on numerous occasions explained that it is only possible for the working class to fight international capitalism, capitalist globalization, with its own international strategy.

Those who single out the WTO, however, and make globalization (not capitalist globalization) the enemy are in fact arguing for a “better” capitalism. They claim that national development, a turn away from the development of technology and the productive forces, can provide a way forward. The truth is exactly the opposite. An international socialist movement and strategy must be built to truly develop the wealth of humanity on behalf of all.

In closing: from the tone of your letter, you don't appear to be seriously examining any of these issues. Such an examination would include a thorough study of what we have written, both on globalization as well as the post-election crisis.

Sincerely,
Fred Mazelis,
for the *World Socialist Web Site*



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