

After Sanders, Green Party seeks to trap workers and youth within capitalist politics

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With Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders officially endorsing Hillary Clinton as the Democratic Party presidential nominee earlier this week, the Green Party is emerging as a contender in the effort to block the independent political mobilization of the working class.

In a live-streamed statement Tuesday, Jill Stein, the likely Green Party presidential nominee, said she was saddened that Sanders had “gone back to the Democrats,” but she told his supporters they could “keep this revolution going” by joining her election campaign. The Greens, she said, were the “only party not poisoned by money,” which “put people, planet and peace before profit.”

Stein did not denounce Sanders for perpetuating a political fraud on millions of workers and young people by talking about “democratic socialism” and opposing the “billionaire class” and then endorsing Clinton, a warmonger and shill for Wall Street.

Indeed, Stein is evidently so impressed by Sanders’ role in subordinating workers and youth to the Democratic Party that she has offered to step aside and hand him the presidential nomination of the Green Party. “I’ve invited Bernie to sit down and explore collaboration—everything is on the table,” she told the *Guardian* last week. “If he saw that you can’t have a revolutionary campaign in a counterrevolutionary party, he’d be welcomed to the Green party. He could lead the ticket and build a political movement.”

Little could so clearly expose the Green Party’s claims to be independent of the Democrats than the fact that their likely presidential nominee is more than willing to cede her position to someone who has spent decades collaborating with the Democrats and who just ran for the Democratic nomination.

Sanders, Stein said, was part of a “long line of true reformers,” including Jesse Jackson, Howard Dean and Dennis Kucinich, who had had “inspired so much hope” but had been sabotaged by the Democrats.

There is nothing “revolutionary” about either the Sanders’ campaign or the Green Party. As the Socialist Equality Party

warned from the beginning, Sanders has worked to tap into anticapitalist sentiment that has grown during the Obama years of bank bailouts and endless wars in order to contain and strangle it.

There is a division of labor between Sanders on the one side and the Greens, which are nominally independent from the Democrats, on the other. While the Vermont senator and Democratic operatives like Jackson, Dean and Kucinich before him perpetuated the myth that the Democrats could be pushed to the left from the inside, the Greens seek to pressure the Democrats from the outside. In either case, such a perspective is a political dead end for the working class.

While the Greens maintain an organizational independence from the Democratic Party, they are not an anticapitalist, let alone working-class or socialist, party. Far from seeking the overthrow of capitalism, the Greens advance the interests of a specific section of the middle class seeking “green business” opportunities and greater influence in corporate and government policy.

The principal founders of the party trace their origins in the antiwar movement of the 1960s and 1970s and various efforts, including the 1984 presidential nomination bid of Jesse Jackson, to “reform” the Democratic Party. The party has since evolved into an electoral mechanism for disparate middle-class elements, from municipal reformers seeking local office to figures like Ralph Nader, who proclaims that the right and the left should be united in opposition to “globalization.” In recent years, pseudo-left groups like the International Socialist Organization have run their members as Green candidates while seeking to paint this pro-capitalist party in socialist colors.

As international experience has shown, the Greens offer no alternative to those looking to fight social inequality, war and dictatorship.

The founding of the US Greens as a national party in 1984 was inspired by the electoral victories of the West German Greens. Once in power, the German Greens quickly jettisoned their pacifist pretensions. By 1999, Joschka Fischer, the former antiwar “street fighter” in 1968 and

foreign minister during the Red-Green coalition government with the Social Democrats, oversaw German imperialism's first military intervention since World War II, first in the Balkans and then in Afghanistan. Other coalition governments propped up by the Greens on the national and municipal level, including in Berlin, imposed savage austerity and dismantled job security protections for workers. Earlier this year, the Greens formed a coalition government with Angela Merkel's right-wing Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

In Australia, the Greens kept the minority Labor Party government in power from 2010 to 2013, even as it integrated Australia into US war plans against China, further opened up Australian bases to the American military and supported US wars in the Middle East. The Greens are now once again offering their service to create a coalition government.

Under conditions of a deep crisis of political legitimacy of both capitalist parties—with Clinton and Trump among the most hated political figures in the US, polling less than 40 percent each for the upcoming presidential elections—the Green Party is seeking to position itself as the post-Sanders catch-all for oppositional sentiment.

The platform of the US Greens does not in any way challenge the economic and political domination of America's corporate and financial oligarchy.

In the official party program, little if anything is said about the immense social chasm in the United States between the financial oligarchy and the working class. There is a passing reference to a tiny wealth tax. Much of the program dovetails with the demands of the ruling class to further reduce living standards by reducing "overconsumption," which the Greens blame for environmental problems.

In her live-streaming statement, Stein called for a "Green New Deal," which would supposedly create employment by investing in "green businesses" and transitioning to 100 percent wind, water and solar power by 2030. This proposal enjoys support from significant sections of corporate America. It was first floated in 2007 by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, a reactionary defender of US imperialism, as a means of economically outstripping China and other competitors.

Stein called on tens of millions of indebted students to vote for her because the president appoints the head of the US Federal Reserve, which she said, could use "quantitative easing" to pay off the big banks and forgive student loans. She also called for government investment to make higher public education free, saying every one dollar in such investment would be paid seven times back. She made no reference to increasing taxes on the rich or taking other

measures to address income and social inequality.

Referring to the series of police killings, Stein said that to "understand where the crisis comes from, we need a truth and reconciliation commission to address the living legacy of slavery that brings these racial disparities to all society, criminal justice, jobs, wages, schools, housing and health. Black lives do matter."

While hoping to gain support from the proponents of identity politics, Stein is joining the Clinton campaign and various Democratic Party-affiliated organizations in concealing the real causes of police brutality and racism itself: the capitalist system and the domination by the wealthy few of the working class, regardless of race or nationality.

Stein also opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement entirely from an economic nationalist standpoint, along the same lines as Sanders, Donald Trump and the trade unions. In this way, the Greens help the global corporations divide the international working class, while aiding the preparations for trade war and ultimately a catastrophic world war.

Concluding her live-streamed remarks, Stein declared, "A mass social movement needs a truly revolutionary party to lift up the voice of that movement and give it political traction." Repeating abolitionist Frederick Douglass's dictum that "power concedes nothing without a demand," Stein insisted, "demand must be brought into the political arena." She concluded by urging Sanders supporters to "join us in Philadelphia [site of the Democratic National Convention later this month] for a people's convention in the streets against the economic elite and to build an America for all of us."

This only underscores the orientation of the Greens to the Democratic Party. Whatever Stein's tactical differences with Sanders and her rhetorical criticisms of Hillary Clinton, she ends up in the same camp promoting the myth that popular pressure can shift the Democrats to the left.



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