

International Socialist Organization promotes Jill Stein, Green Party as “anti-capitalist”

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23 August 2016

In an article posted August 9, titled “A new road ahead for the Green Party,” the International Socialist Organization (ISO) gives its full endorsement to the Green Party of the United States and the proceedings at its national convention, where Jill Stein was nominated as the party’s presidential candidate. The convention was held at the University of Houston August 4-7.

In addition to the ISO, Socialist Alternative, Solidarity and other pseudo-left organizations have endorsed Stein in the aftermath of Bernie Sanders’ declaration of support for Hillary Clinton in the presidential election.

The ISO begins by covering for the Sanders campaign. It writes, “Stein and the Greens have already gained national attention in media coverage of the presidential race, all the more so after Bernie Sanders’ *outsider campaign* for the Democratic nomination *came up short* and his millions of supporters consider their options in November [emphasis added].”

The claim that Sanders—who ran as a Democrat and has allied himself with the Democrats throughout his 25 years in Congress—is an “outsider,” whose campaign merely “came up short,” is a political fraud. While calling himself a “democratic socialist,” Sanders offered a program of tepid liberal reform combined with economic nationalism and support for the imperialist and militarist foreign policy of the Obama administration. He explicitly rejected any challenge to capitalist ownership of the corporations and banks.

The Sanders campaign drew widespread support due to his denunciations of Wall Street and social inequality. Millions who vote for him in the primaries did so because they were looking for a socialist alternative to capitalism. His campaign ended predictably with a craven capitulation to Clinton, whom he now claims is carrying forward his so-called political revolution. As the *World Socialist Web Site* continually warned, the entire purpose of the Sanders campaign was to channel the growing radicalization of workers and youth back into the Democratic Party.

The ISO goes on to support the Green Party’s promotion of identity politics at its convention. The article praises the fact that “the influence of movements like Black Lives Matter made issues of white supremacy and fighting racism central.” The ISO singles out for praise the contributions made by YahNé Ndgo, a former Sanders supporter.

Commenting on Ndgo’s opening night speech, the ISO writes that she “highlighted the significance of former Bernie Sanders supporters in infusing the Green Party with new energy and

vision.” On the final day of the convention, Ndgo told her audience, “I would like all of the people in here who are racists to stand up.” When some of the Green delegates stood, she pressured the others to do the same. All Americans, she said, have “been programmed to be racist against each other and against ourselves.”

By endorsing Ndgo and the Greens’ focus on “white supremacy” and the claim that the entire country is racist, the ISO is promoting the efforts of the Democratic Party and the political establishment as a whole to divide the working class and divert attention from the fundamental issues of social inequality and the drive to war.

In their appraisal of the Greens’ convention, the ISO commends the Green Party for adopting Platform Amendment 835, writing, “The convention also saw the passage of an amendment to the party platform making the Greens an *explicitly anti-capitalist party* for the first time [emphasis added]”. Later, the article mentions in passing that the amendment replaces “old language endorsing ‘responsible stakeholder capitalism.’”

The ISO argues that a three-paragraph amendment to the Greens’ program, adopted with virtually no discussion, has transformed an organization that for decades has supported capitalism and acted as a reformist pressure group on the two-party system into an “anti-capitalist party.”

In reality, the amendment represents a tactical maneuver by the Green Party in response to the success of the Sanders campaign and the growing interest among workers and youth in socialism. Discussion of the amendment began only in mid-May 2016, by which time Sanders had already won 20 primaries and 1,438 delegates.

The ISO article unwittingly makes clear the thoroughly opportunist character of the Greens’ platform amendment and the party as a whole. Ursula Rozum, co-chair of the Young Greens and secretary of the New York Green Party, is quoted as saying the amendment was drafted because the “Sanders campaign made ‘socialism’ a part of the mainstream discussion, and probably shifted some party leaders who previously feared an outright anti-capitalist position would marginalize the organization.”

A closer examination of the amendment reveals that it contains absolutely nothing “anti-capitalist.” Rather, it is an eclectic mixture of anarchistic and anti-Marxist formulations that reject central planning, workers’ control over the means of production and the political hegemony of the working class.

The adopted amendment states, “The Green Party seeks to build

an alternative economic system based on ecology and decentralization of power, an alternative that rejects both the capitalist system that maintains private ownership over almost all production as well as the state-socialist system that assumes control over industries without democratic, local decision making. We believe the old models of capitalism (private ownership of production) and state socialism (state ownership of production) are not ecologically sound, socially just, or democratic and that both contain built-in structures that advance injustices.”

The language in the amendment obfuscates the class character of the state and the relations of production, promoting illusions that there can exist “an alternative economic system” without abolishing bourgeois private property and the capitalist state.

In *The State and Revolution*, written during the buildup to the October 1917 Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin characterizes the state as an instrument of class rule, used in capitalist society by the bourgeoisie to suppress the working class and maintain the capitalists’ domination over economic life. He notes, “The overthrow of the bourgeoisie is realizable only by the transformation of the proletariat into the *ruling class*, able to crush the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and to organize, for the new economic order, *all* the toiling and exploited masses.”

If the Greens are opposed to “state socialism (state ownership of production),” i.e., the formation of a workers’ state, then which class will rule? The state is not a neutral arbiter, but an instrument of class rule. It is presently controlled entirely by the corporate and financial elite, which dictates foreign and domestic policy. In the absence of a working class revolution, the state will continue to function in the interests of the capitalists, pursuing policies of austerity and war.

Instead of providing a class analysis, the Greens substitute a nebulous, anarchistic and essentially primitivist notion of decentralization, community control and local autonomy. They write, “We will build an economy based on large-scale green public works, municipalization, and workplace and community democracy. Some call this decentralized system ‘ecological socialism,’ ‘communalism,’ or the ‘cooperative commonwealth.’”

In closing, the amendment claims that “Democratic, diverse ownership of production would decentralize power in the workplace, which would in turn decentralize economic power more broadly.”

The use of the word “diverse,” as with many other ambiguous terms in the document, such as “communities” instead of “classes,” is deliberately vague. By no means does “diverse ownership” rule out private ownership. It also implies a reference to identity politics and call for increasing racial and gender diversity in corporate boardrooms.

The ISO claims that this amendment has transformed the Greens into an anti-capitalist party, but their platform as a whole reiterates their support for American capitalism.

The platform, originally adopted in July 2014, upholds the Malthusian view that an abstract and ahistorical “overpopulation” and “unsustainable consumption” are the source of environmental degradation, instead of the exploitation of workers and pillaging of

the environment by the capitalist class.

A particularly revealing section, titled “Work and Job Creation,” exposes their hostility to the American working class. They write that they support “reducing consumption to minimize outsourcing—the exportation of jobs to other countries—thus reducing the relative price of using US workers.”

In other words, the Greens in power will enact wage-cutting and austerity in order to further transform the US into a low-wage economy ripe for exploitation. The reactionary character of their concern about “over-consumption” is fully exposed by this platform proposal.

While hailing the Green Party, the ISO chose to omit any mention of the anti-war rhetoric used by Stein and others at the convention. In her acceptance speech, Stein declared, “On the count of climate [change], and on the count of nuclear weapons and this insane nuclear arms race that we are once again headlong plunging into, and on account of these endless and expanding wars that are blowing back at us all around the world, we cannot afford to sit this one out.”

Stein remained deliberately vague in her denunciations of war, not once referring to “imperialism,” “Obama,” “Bush” or “Clinton,” or pointing concretely to any of the myriad wars and atrocities committed by American imperialism over the past quarter century, which have left over a million dead. She also reiterated the Green Party’s support for military interventions that are justified on the grounds of “human rights” and have the endorsement of the United Nations.

The ISO’s omission was undoubtedly intentional. Prior to the Greens’ convention, it published another article urging the Green Party to openly support the US-backed “revolution” in Syria. It criticized Stein, saying she has “sometimes downplayed the role of other imperialist forces, such as Russia, which is intervening to uphold its own interests.”

It also criticized Stein’s running mate, Ajamu Baraka, for writing “articles minimizing the scale of repression carried out by the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria against the revolutionary opposition, while reinforcing the myth that the Assad regime represents an expression of ‘national sovereignty’ against US imperialism.”

The ISO has specialized in presenting the imperialist-backed civil war in Syria, led by Islamic fundamentalist organizations, as a “revolution,” and painting those who denounce it as supporters of Assad and Putin. Their branding of Russia as “imperialist” echoes the war propaganda of the Obama administration and its media mouthpieces, who use this designation as an epithet against both Russia and China in order to justify future military action against them.



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