

Green Party presidential candidate seeks to corral antiwar sentiment

Jerry White
5 September 2016

Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein held a campaign rally in Detroit Saturday afternoon. While the event attracted a couple hundred supporters, including students and workers who had backed Bernie Sanders and had been shocked and angered by his endorsement of Hillary Clinton, the Green presidential candidate offered them no way forward.

The Green Party has pitched itself as and has become the “political home” of groups that have long operated within the orbit of the Democratic Party. Pseudo-left groups, such as the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative and the Socialist Party USA hope to transform the Greens into an electoral vehicle for their entry into bourgeois politics. This is the path taken by the Green parties in Germany, Australia and other countries, which upon entering coalition governments proceeded to support militarism and austerity.

The Greens are making a specific effort to incorporate the proponents of identity politics in their “big umbrella.” In his remarks, Green vice presidential candidate Ajamu Baraka declared, “We say to Black Lives Matter, we support your platform, which is the same as ours almost word-for-word.” The fact that the Greens would support such a platform—which calls for “black ownership,” “community control,” “independent Black political power and black self-determination”—only underscores the fact that the Greens are not an anti-capitalist party.

On the contrary, they advance the interests of a privileged upper-middle-class layer, which wants a more favorable distribution of wealth within the top 10 percent of the population.

In addition to the proponents of racialist politics, the coalition backing the Greens includes various environmental entrepreneurs who want state funding for alternative energy, urban gardening and other Green

capitalist projects, which would be part of Stein’s “Green New Deal.” Added to this are sections of the union bureaucracy who are opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership and other trade deals from the standpoint of economic nationalism.

Well aware of the treacherous record of other nominally left groups when they are in power, Baraka tried to assure his audience, “We won’t make the mistake of some hyper-pragmatists on the left and progressive movements who were elected and then managed the affairs of the elite. We will uphold the principles of our party.”

In her remarks to the rally, Stein referred to the immense levels of social inequality and the rise of social opposition, including the sickouts by teachers in Detroit and the opposition by the working-class residents of Flint to the lead poisoning of their water. While criticizing the anti-immigrant chauvinism of Trump, she pointed out that Democrats—without mentioning Obama once—had detained and deported immigrants, imposed reactionary sentencing laws and deregulated Wall Street.

Most interesting, however, were Stein’s remarks on the dangers of war, which reflected an awareness of deep popular opposition to new imperialist war. Her remarks also underscored the concerns of some sections of the US political establishment over the dangers, domestically and internationally, of Clinton’s aggressive push for a military confrontation with Russia and China.

Stein said it would not be safe to sleep with either Trump or Clinton in the White House. She denounced Clinton’s war in Libya, which Stein said had created a refugee disaster and helped arm ISIS. “Now Clinton wants an air war over Syria with the Russians, including a no-fly zone. There are already 2,000

nuclear warheads on hair trigger alert. We cannot go down that dark path.”

She noted Clinton’s ties to Saudi Arabia, and called for a weapons embargo and diplomatic pressure on the Gulf State as well as Turkey to stop the flow of weapons into the civil war in Syria. She said the “demonization of Russia and China were being done to justify a massive military budget,” and only helped the “Neo-Cons and the war profiteers.” Instead she called for US foreign policy to be guided by “international human rights and diplomacy.”

Stein pointed hopefully to the supposed change of heart of geostrategist and former Carter administration National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. “He was one of the Neo-Cons who authored the strategy to take over the Middle East. But he has changed his mind and said it is time for the US to join the community of nations and replace domination with cooperation. Somehow the other Neo-Cons didn’t get the message.”

The hope Stein places in the imperialist war criminal Brzezinski captures the essence of the Green Party. It is sowing illusions that the drive to war by the United States can be stopped by appealing to the self-interests of supposed “enlightened” sections of the ruling class itself. But war arises not out of mistaken views of the powers-that-be, but the interests of the American ruling class bound up with the decades-long decline of American capitalism and the explosive competition between imperialist powers inherent in the capitalist nation-state system.

The catastrophic drive toward a nuclear world war can only be stopped and the military machine of American imperialism disarmed by the politically independent mobilization of the working class in the United States in collaboration with its brothers and sisters internationally. The Socialist Equality Party in the United States, in conjunction with its sister parties throughout the International Committee of the Fourth International, is building just such an antiwar movement based on the program of international socialism.

The Greens are hostile to socialism and any struggle to break the working class from the political tutelage and domination of the upper middle classes. Its pro-capitalist and nationalist orientation lead the Greens invariably to adapt to the nationalist pressures of one or another sections of their “own” capitalist classes,

resulting in the abandonment of their pacifist and anti-austerity positions.

This reporter asked Stein to speak on the German Greens’ support for the 1999 bombing of Serbia when Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer took Germany into its first military intervention since World War II. He also asked her about the Australian Greens support for the US “pivot to Asia” and its increasingly reckless confrontation with China.

Stein sought to sidestep the questions by saying that each of the respective national Green parties was free to choose their own policies. “The Green Party in the US has a very clear position,” she said, “we are unified with *most* of the Green parties around the world in opposing this policy of militarism and imperialism and the rush into the war in Syria [emphasis added]... Of course, every Green party is sovereign but we have a lot of influence in helping to move the ball down the court for an America and world that works for all of us.”

She also sidestepped this reporter’s questions about her support for Bernie Sanders, who repeatedly defended Obama’s drone assassinations and war policies. While seeking to pick up those sections of workers and young people who are disgusted by Sanders’ support for the warmonger Hillary Clinton, the Greens are deliberately seeking to block them from drawing any political lessons from the Sanders experience. Instead, they want young people and workers who were repelled by one political trap to fall into another.



To contact the WSWP and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

www.wswp.org/contact