

Howie Hawkins and the Green Party: Capitalist politics in the guise of “ecosocialism”

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In the aftermath of Bernie Sanders’ endorsement of Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden last month, the Green Party is presenting itself as the continuation of Sanders’ “political revolution.” Workers and youth seeking an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans must be warned: The Green Party is a capitalist party with no real independence from the Democrats.

The Green Party is presently on track to nominate Howie Hawkins, one of the co-founders of the party in 1984, as its presidential candidate. Hawkins has announced that Angela Walker will be his running mate for vice president. Both Hawkins and Walker are also members of Socialist Party USA and Solidarity, pseudo-left groups that operate in the orbit of the Democratic Party.

The Hawkins-Walker campaign platform itself is an eclectic list of various reform proposals, centered on an “Ecosocialist Green New Deal.” To fund their programs, they call not for the expropriation of the wealth of the capitalists or the nationalization of any corporations, but simply “progressive taxation.” The words “working class,” “capitalist class” and “revolution” do not appear in their platform.

The various reforms proposed by the Greens, however, are no more meaningful than those proposed by Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the like, as they are tied to a political strategy aimed at bolstering the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military.

Under conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which over 350,000 people have died worldwide, including over 100,000 Americans, while the working class faces social dislocation on a scale not seen since the Great Depression and is being forced to return to work in deadly conditions, the response of the Hawkins-Walker campaign and the Green Party is to try to keep opposition contained within the framework of bourgeois politics.

Their campaign has only released a handful of statements addressing the pandemic, none of which raise any serious solutions to this unprecedented crisis. Rather, they call on Congress to expand Medicare and enact the Green New Deal, urge Trump to utilize the Defense Production Act more thoroughly, plead for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to demand that personal protective equipment be provided to workers, and place other minor demands on the existing political establishment.

All of their statements omit any criticisms of the nearly unanimous Democratic Party vote—including by Sanders and Elizabeth Warren—for the multi-trillion-dollar handout to Wall Street through the CARES Act. Further, they say nothing of the culpability of Democratic governors across the US who are rapidly “reopening the

economy” in line with the Trump administration, including Gavin Newsom of California, Andrew Cuomo of New York, Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, and more.

The pro-Democratic Party perspective, and the role of the Green Party more generally, was clearly expressed in an online Q&A session held on May 19 with Hawkins and Walker.

Hawkins explained that the role of the Green Party is not to “spoil” elections for the Democrats, but the exact opposite, to ensure that they win: “In my experience, I’m living in a congressional district where the only time a Democrat beat the Republicans since the Vietnam War...was when a Green was in the race. And of course, we were told we’re splitting the vote. But what we did was change the dynamic. And the Democrat, instead of trying to talk like the Republican-light and get votes in the middle, had to deal with us and our positions, and they made them sound a lot better.”

Hawkins expressed satisfaction that they were able to help the Democrats win, stating emphatically, “We improve elections, we don’t spoil them!”

Taken at his word, Hawkins is saying that the Greens have helped elect numerous Democrats over the past four decades. During this period, the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, have presided over endless war and a massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich.

Responding to the question, “Are there any demands, policies your campaign could pressure Biden on?” Hawkins replied, “I think all the things that made Bernie Sanders popular—Medicare for All, Green New Deal, Economic Bill of Rights, student and medical debt relief—[Biden’s] vulnerable, and we have leverage because Sanders got a lot of votes, and we’re the only campaign real clear about we’re for those things. And I think that gives us leverage on Biden.”

In his typically muddled fashion, Hawkins added, “Of course, the thing you gotta watch out is, politicians make promises that they don’t follow through. And so, even if he does move our way, we should remain insistent. He gotta earn those votes. If people believe him, okay they believe him. If they’re skeptical, we’re still here.”

In other words, Hawkins’ strategy is the same as Sanders—that Biden can be pushed to the left. This is, in fact, a political fraud. Biden personifies the Democratic Party as a party of Wall Street and the military. Sanders is now campaigning all out to get his supporters to back Biden, as he did with Clinton in 2016. He has gone so far as to threaten his delegates that their position will be revoked if they publicly criticize Biden.

The position of Hawkins and the Greens is not fundamentally

different. Throughout his campaign, Hawkins has made clear he has no principled differences with Sanders or the politics of the Democratic Party as a whole. This was sharply expressed following Sanders's announcement that he was suspending his campaign, which led Hawkins to offer Sanders the Green Party candidacy, just as Jill Stein did in 2016.

As a trustworthy Democrat, Sanders snubbed the Greens, endorsed Biden, and branded as "irresponsible" anyone that didn't campaign for Biden, none of which has prompted any significant statement of criticism from Hawkins or the Green Party as a whole.

The real essence of the politics of the Green Party was summed up by Hawkins and Walker when they declared that their aim after the election is to create "a united front of independent non-sectarian left parties."

"Non-sectarian" as used by Hawkins and other organizations of the pseudo-left, means everyone except the Socialist Equality Party. By "sectarian" they mean any organization that rejects a political orientation to the Democratic Party and seeks to build a genuine socialist leadership in the working class.

In creating this "united front" against socialism, the Green Party hopes to serve as a halfway house for various pseudo-left organizations that had been promoting Sanders, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Socialist Alternative (SA), Socialist Party USA, Solidarity and other smaller parties. Each of these organizations operates in or around the Democratic Party, but some have been hesitant to openly support Biden, fearing that this will discredit them in the eyes of young people who are under the impression that they are socialist organizations.

A final word on the role of the Green Party internationally. Wherever the Greens have come to power, they have rapidly abandoned their so-called principles and collaborated with bourgeois parties to uphold the interests of the financial oligarchy.

This found its highest expression in Germany, where from 1998 to 2005 the Green Party joined the federal government for the first time in a "Red-Green" coalition government. While in power, the Greens oversaw the first German combat mission since World War II, the NATO war in Serbia, while helping force through the Hartz IV labor laws, the most sweeping attack on welfare programs in Germany in the post-war period. They have supported every foreign mission by the Bundeswehr since then, including the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, while scapegoating refugees fleeing these wars.

The Austrian Greens this year entered into a coalition government with the right-wing conservative Austrian People's Party, and immediately adopted the policies of the far-right Freedom Party, including anti-immigrant measures. In New Zealand, Australia and other countries, the Greens have supported their respective imperialist governments in the drive to war. In the present situation, in which the ruling classes internationally are enforcing a homicidal policy of "reopening the economy" under unsafe conditions, the Greens in power in Austria and Germany have wholeheartedly endorsed this campaign.

Were Hawkins or any other Green Party politician to come to power in the US, their nationalist outlook would compel them to enforce the dictates of the American financial oligarchy, including through policies of war and austerity.

Like Sanders, moreover, Hawkins has sanctioned the neo-McCarthyism of the Democrats, supporting their anti-Russia campaign and their efforts to channel mass opposition to Trump behind the military and intelligence agencies. In an interview last year

with YouTuber PRIMO NUTMEG, Hawkins stated, "The media is following this Russiagate thing, which I think is serious, and I think Trump ought to be impeached. I think it's obvious he sought collusion, he did collude, him and his son, his son-in-law. It's all over there, in that first volume of the Mueller report, it's all over there!"

In the same interview, Hawkins also endorsed the show trial of Julian Assange, who has been persecuted since 2010 for exposing the crimes of American imperialism. Responding to the question, "Do you think WikiLeaks was involved in this Russian plot?" Hawkins replied, "There's circumstantial evidence, like where are the WikiLeaks about Putin?" He added, "That remains to be seen if he was working with the Russians, or just biased with them. We'll see, I'm not sure."

In class terms, the Green Party is a party of the upper middle class. It is hostile to the working class and the development of a genuine socialist movement against capitalism. In its statements and commentary, it ignores the growth of working-class opposition while attempting to bolster the trade unions, which function as arms of corporate management and cheap labor police forces.

All of the great problems confronting the working class today—the COVID-19 pandemic, mass poverty, climate change and other ecological catastrophes, and the ever-present danger of a Third World War—are global in scope and can only be resolved through international socialist revolution. Any deviation from internationalism represents an opportunist sacrifice of the long-term interests of the working class.

The conditions wrought by the pandemic are radicalizing masses of workers and youth internationally, and the necessary task is to build a revolutionary socialist vanguard in the working class to lead the coming struggles to victory.

The only political movement in the world fighting for this perspective is the ICFI. In the 2020 elections in the US, the SEP is running Joseph Kishore for president and Norissa Santa Cruz for vice president, in a campaign whose aim is to educate the international working class on the principles of revolutionary socialism, popularize our program to combat the pandemic and overthrow capitalism, and fight to recruit the most advanced workers and youth to our party. We urge all those interested in genuine socialism to get involved with our campaign and contact us today.



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