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USA

Only the Privileged Can Afford Hillary Clinton – “A vote for Jill Stein is not a wasted vote”!

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It’s that time again in the presidential election cycle when the scolds of institutionalized liberalism are out in force to bully people into voting for the perennial corporate Democrat in order to stop the perennially worse corporate Republican. Paul Krugman. Robert Reich. Ben Jealous. Dan Savage. Michael Moore. Joy Reid. Bernie Sanders. Tom Toles. In These Times. The Nation. The Root. Daily Kos. Rolling Stone. The New York Times.

"Only the privileged can afford to vote for Jill Stein" is one refrain. But only the privileged can afford the status quo represented by Hillary Clinton, from growing inequality and persistent poverty to the climate crisis and endless wars. The liberals shout that we must vote for Clinton to stop Trump. But the history of Clintonism is triangulation, accommodation to the right. She may stop Trump for president. But she is not going to stop Trumpism. Not only have the Clintons and Trump socialized together in the precincts of the higher circles before this election, the Clintons have often echoed the dog whistles of the racist Republican “southern strategy” that Trump has centered his campaign around.

We’ve seen this all the way from Bill’s 1992 presidential campaign, with his execution of Ricky Ray Rector just in time for the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary and then his pre-Super Tuesday tough-on-crime event at the symbolic capital of white supremacists at Stone Mountain, Georgia, on down to Bill’s condescending defense of that crime bill, and Hillary’s “super-predator” remarks in support of it, to the faces of Black critics at a campaign event in Philadelphia in April of this year.

As bad as the signals to white racists are, the center of gravity of Clintonite triangulation is its commitment the domestic austerity and global militarism favored by the corporate elites who have funded their political ambitions. Since Sanders endorsed her, Clinton has campaigned to her right, running ads with endorsements from outspoken militarists and besting Trump by far in campaign donations from the high rollers of every corporate sector, from Wall Street, real estate, and corporate media to Big Pharma, Big Energy, and the military contractors.

When she does make a gesture to the inequality issues that Sanders raised, she highlights the same trickle-down corporate welfare policies that have made inequality worse since the mid 1970s. For example, in her Sept. 22 NY Times op-ed, “My Plan for Helping America’s Poor,” Clinton says she will make economic growth a priority with public investments (i.e., corporate contracts and subsidies) that will create good jobs for the poor. That’s the same approach we’ve seen since Carter and Reagan that targets “anti-poverty” spending to businesses, not poor and working people.

To create more affordable housing, Clinton says in her op-ed that she wants to expand the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), another program where the money goes to businesses, not poor people. This tax credit was enacted in conjunction with the regressive tax reform of 1986, which, though often called the Reagan tax reform, was thoroughly bipartisan with sponsorship by leading Democrats Richard Gephardt of Missouri in the House and Bill Bradley of New Jersey in the Senate. It cut the top income tax bracket from 50% to 25% and increased the bottom tax bracket from 11% to 15%. The LIHTC has since expanded while public housing and Section 8 vouchers have been cut back, even though public housing and vouchers provide far more affordable housing for the same expenditure. The LIHTC is now 90 percent of federal affordable housing support. But rents in LIHTC units are more than 30% of income (the federal definition of affordability) for the people with incomes below 50% of the Area Median Income. Looking beneath the stated goal of affordability, Clinton’s housing policy expands a program that helps developers (and her campaign donations from real estate interests), but does little to solve the growing crisis of housing affordability.

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Joshua Holland writing in *The Nation* justifies his support for Clinton by touting the 2016 Democratic platform [1], “which Bernie Sanders, among others, hailed as the most progressive in the party’s history.” Oh, really? The 1972 Democratic platform had these progressive planks:

â€¢ Single-payer National Health Insurance.

â€¢ Repeal of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, which allows state anti-union right-to-work laws.

â€¢ Extend Fair Labor Standards Act coverage to farmworkers.

â€¢ “Substantial” cuts in military spending.

â€¢ Cut is overseas military bases and forces.

â€¢ Public campaign financing.

None of these planks are in the Democrat’s 2016 platform. Meanwhile, the pro-Clinton majority on the platform committee voted down these progressive planks for the 2016 Democratic platform:

â€¢ Single-payer National Health Insurance.

â€¢ Oppose TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership).

â€¢ A carbon tax.

â€¢ A ban on fracking.

â€¢ A ban of fossil fuel drilling on federal lands and waters.

â€¢ \$15 minimum wage indexed to inflation.

â€¢ Oppose Israeli occupation and settlements on the West Bank.

â€¢ Reconstruction aid for Gaza.

When the conventional wisdom blandly accepts claims that the 2016 Democratic platform is the party’s most progressive in the history, it just shows how thoroughly today’s corporate New Democrats have marginalized the progressive remnants of the New Deal Democrats. A vote for Jill Stein is not a wasted vote. It is a vote to build an independent political movement that can contest the two-corporate-party cartel for power. Stein won’t win the presidency. But the movement can win several gains in this election.

The first is what third parties have historically contributed in American politics: to force demands into public debate that the two major parties have ignored. In this election, those demands include single-payer, defeat TPP, serious climate action, a WPA-style public jobs for the unemployed, and military spending cuts with the savings devoted to

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uplifting struggling poor and working people. The bigger the Stein vote, the more leverage the independent political movement will have on these issues going forward.

The second is ballot lines. A Green ballot line for the next two or four years is up for grabs in 37 states, for 1% to 3% of the vote in most of them. Those ballot lines will enable the independent left to run competitive and winnable races at the local level, which is how an independent political movement will develop into a national force.

Third, 5% of the vote will qualify the Green Party for public funding for the 2020 presidential general election. This is a second presidential public campaign financing fund, in addition to the primary matching fund for which Stein qualified in this election, that starts at about \$10 million at 5% and goes up with higher percentages. With Stein polling between 3% and 6% in most polls, this goal is within reach.

Fourth, the lists of supporters that Stein/Baraka campaigners develop canvassing voters during this election can be the base for post-election organizing, from stopping TPP in the lame duck session of conference to local independent Green and left campaigns for public office in the next election.

A vote for Clinton is not only a wasted vote for the status quo, it is a vote against the Green Party's challenge to the two-party system of corporate rule.

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