

Debating Green Electoral Strategy



[This is a verbatim transcript of Episode 73 of the podcast titled RevolutionZ.]

Hello, this is Michael Albert and I'm the host of the podcast titled RevolutionZ. This is Episode 73 and today we have as our guest, Howie Hawkins to discuss Green Election Strategy.

Howie was the first US electoral candidate to campaign for a Green New Deal. He was one of the original Greens in the United States, having participated in the first national meeting to organize a US Green Party in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1984. Howie became active in the movement for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam in the 1960s as a teenager in San Francisco.

Since then, Howie has been a constant organizer and peace, justice, union and environmental campaigns, and has in fact been involved in organizations, campaigns and movements literally too numerous to list. From the start, Howie was committed to independent working class politics for a democratic socialist and ecological society. Howie has been the Green Party's candidate for governor of New York among other posts and is currently seeking to become Green Party candidate for President in 2020.

Albert: So, Howie, welcome to the podcast RevolutionZ.

Hawkins: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Albert: Before we get into the current situation we now all face, perhaps you could tell us your view of the Green Party

writ large. For example, how would you summarize its long term aims?

Hawkins: Well, I think our long term aim is to become a major force in American politics. And with this Coronavirus, health, and economic crisis, with an inept President Trump and invisible Biden who does have a megaphone, I think we have an opportunity to really advance in this election. And the way we're going to do it, though, really is not out of a presidential campaign. We have got to build it from the bottom up. We've got to elect thousands of greens to local office or local districts of state legislators in Congress as we go into the 2020s. And that's how we get the credibility in the minds of the people that 'Yeah, the greens can actually be elected.'

We do have 129 elected officials around the country, hardly anybody knows that. And while that's just a drop in the bucket, because there's about 500,000 elected officers in this country, it's more than any party on the left has had since the heyday of the Socialist Party, you know, going back to the 30s. And before that.

Albert: How then would you say that Greens view, again writ sort of large, the relative importance of winning elections, as compared to running in elections they're obviously not yet ready to win? And in each case, what are the hoped for benefits?

Hawkins: Well, in every case, it's advancing issues that the major parties won't deal with. And that's been the historic role of third parties going back to the working men's party in 1830, and the Liberty Party against slavery in the 1840s, and so forth, and without taking power except the Republicans which was a descendant of Liberty Party, Free Soil party, then the Republican Party come into power in the late 1850s. And then Lincoln got elected president. The third parties haven't taken power, but they have put issues that became policy, like the Socialist Party's reforms regarding social insurance were

picked up by Roosevelt in the New Deal. So we always do that. And I can give you examples where, you know, we've succeeded in doing that. I'll give you one example.

I ran for governor in 2014. In New York, I got 5% of the vote. And Governor Cuomo had wanted to run up the vote to get ready to run for president. He wanted to get more than his father Mario Cuomo ever got, get more than he got in 2010 when he was first elected, but he got less. And he had to look at what we were saying. He couldn't take us for granted. And he came around on three key demands that he hadn't supported before, after he was elected, a ban on fracking, paid family leave, and a \$15 minimum wage. So we always want to influence the process by putting these issues forward and not being taken for granted. But that's what we can do in every election. Now, every election, it depends on what you're running for and what the circumstances are. I mean, I'm running for president, you know, and I'm in the six figures financially. And, you know, Biden, and Trump are in the seven or eight figures. I mean, right there, there's a big disadvantage. So I know I'm a long shot. But when you get down to the local level, we're knocking on doors and getting to know people and having a record in the community as an activist that people know and trust. We have a good chance of getting elected in local races and actually you look at the the percentage of races Greens run in and win at the local level and it's pretty high. And we just have to get more people who are socialists and progressives running for these local offices. So we can begin to build a counter force from the bottom up.

Albert: That makes perfectly good sense to me. I'm fine with the idea that running to raise consciousness is good, running to put pressure on others is good, and running to win is good. Where a question arises for me, however, which you and I have discussed in print a bit, is in the details of presidential elections, in particular the one that you're about to, hopefully from your point of view and mine too, actually run

in as the Green Party candidate. So I think your running in 2020 and advocating a program way to the left of the Democrats, and even well to the left of Sanders is fine and even excellent to raise consciousness and to raise issues and put on pressure, in, I guess in about 40 safe states where there is simply no doubt that Trump or Biden, supposing Biden runs, will win. I live in one of those safe states, Massachusetts, and I could and would vote for you there. But I think it is not good in swing states and this is what I'd like to discuss with you. That is in states where it is unclear who will win, like Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and so on, you perhaps should tell – in my view, you should tell – your supporters that since humanity's future, and thus also, of course, Green politics and Green program would be most benefited by Trump losing, and would be most obstructed by Trump winning, each far, far more so than by you getting more or less votes in those swing states, to vote for Biden for the 10 minutes that it takes and then return to their Green and other activism.

Now instead, and please correct me if I have this wrong, I think you feel you should urge them to vote Green, for you or for whoever might be running if it isn't you, in swing states just like in safe states, because your getting their votes will be more beneficial for what they and you and I believe in and desire than if those votes went to Biden, even if the number of votes you get would have won for Biden, whereas without those votes for Biden Trump would win. So if that's your view, can you please tell us the essence of the supporting logic? And if it isn't your view, of course, please correct me.

Hawkins: No, we're running in every state to get votes in every state. And I'm not scolding people who make the calculation that they want to vote for the lesser evil in a battleground state. But for the Greens, every state is a battleground. One thing we got to get out of the election is

ballot lines. And in about 40 of the states, how many votes we get determines whether we have a ballot line going forward, which enables us to run local candidates. In most states it's, well it runs between a half a percent like in New Mexico, most states are 1, 2, or 3%, a few are 5%, Alabama is 20% so that's going to be tough. But that's, you know, one crucial objective of our campaign and then you know, if we don't support ourselves in some states I mean, why should anybody else, so I think that just creates the wrong message. But like I said, I'm not gonna scold or shame people that, you know, make that lesser evil calculation, but I will say in some of these battleground states, I mean, the Democrats are on the other side. Just take the, you know, one of those existential issues, the climate crisis and the need to stop fracking and new fossil fuel infrastructure. So in Pennsylvania, they're fracking the hell out of the state. They're building pipelines that funnel toward either gas fired plants in the northeast, or this petrochemical plastics complex they're building in the Ohio Valley Appalachia area, which you know, is going to produce massive amounts of non biodegradable plastic so a huge environmental problem in itself. And even the elected officials in Pennsylvania that supported Bernie Sanders won't touch that issue. Or go up to Michigan. You know, the Democrats won't take...

Albert: Howie, I don't disagree with you about any of this. You're pushing an open door here. I just want to make clear that I have nothing good to say about the Democratic Party, but the issue isn't are they bad, either in specific instances like those you mention, or across the board. The issue is what to do in certain circumstances. So I'm trying to understand your reason for not forswearing running in contested states, which is what I would suggest, or to run there, and literally, say vote for Biden as lesser evil and vote for Greens all up and down the rest of the ballot and then go home and fight against Biden when he's president. Your reason for not doing that is to build the Green Party, to not send the wrong

message and cause people to feel Greens are irrelevant or not worth supporting. But I think the approach might be having the opposite effect.

I know that's weird for me to say to somebody who's in the Greens and is as prominently active as you are. But in 2000 Ralph Nader got 2.7% of the vote on the Green Party line, and 16 years later, Jill Stein got 1% of the vote. In 2004, there were a total about 230, Green Party members in local offices around the country. But now I heard a quote from you saying there are 130 in office. So it doesn't seem to me that this strategy of, you know, voting in contested states when it becomes contentious and when later there's a sense of blame, is actually in fact building the Green Party. Do you think it is?

Hawkins: Yeah, because we've got ballot lines where we've been able to run. You mentioned we've declined in the number of local elected officials. I didn't get the year but, you know, movements ebb and flow and we're in a situation where people are scared to death of Trump. I mean, I had people saying they had to vote for Andrew Cuomo when I ran for governor in 2018, who had gave me money and made phone calls for me, because they wanted to send a message to Trump. You know, I guess support the Democratic Party. Which I think was, you know, Trump wasn't even on the ballot. It just didn't make a lot of sense. But that's what the mentality is. So, you know, I understand we're in a difficult situation. But, you know, it's not a time for us to fold up our tents.

I was, you know, about to talk to Michigan, I was invited to speak up there against this oil pipeline that they want to expand, which the environmentalists and American Indians up there want to shut down. And I was invited by the Democratic caucus of the Anishinaabe Indians, and they invited me up there because they said, we can't get the Democrats, maybe you can help us get their attention. So that's the kind of thing we can do, by you know, being in every state and, you know,

the Democrats aren't being any help in stopping that pipeline up there in Michigan. And we can go through all kinds of issues, affordable housing everywhere, because the Democratic machines are totally tied up with real estate. And the Greens always find themselves fighting the Democrats when they're fighting for affordable housing. So like I said, we're getting ballot lines so we can continue these fights.

Albert: But you can get the ballot lines other ways also, right? You can get them by doing petitions. Is that right?

Hawkins: Well, yeah, you can do a petition, which is huge. And if you don't have a ballot line, the numbers we got to get are much higher than for major party candidates in their primaries.

Albert: Yeah, but that's a reality. And Jill Stein got only 1% of the vote. So there's a lot of states that you have to get petitions in.

Hawkins: Like in New York having a ballot line meant our statewide candidates were automatically on the ballot.

Albert: You could work to be on the ballot as compared to being automatically on the ballot.

Hawkins: You can always be working on that for six weeks in July and August when you should be doing other things for the campaign. Then you file your petition and the Democrats challenge it even if it's frivolous, and they delay it until October and then they say we can't have you in debate because you're not on a ballot. And finally, you know, the board of election or the court says, no, they should be on the ballot and it's like, you know, four weeks till the election. It's a lot of nonsense. If we're on the ballot, we can...

Albert: I don't doubt it...

Hawkins: And they just made it worse. The Democrats just made

it worse in New York, they tripled the number of signatures. Instead of 15,000 in six weeks, we have to get 45,000 so we got to triple the number of votes to get in this coming election to keep our ballot line. And that was done by the Governor under the cover of the Coronavirus crisis.

Albert: I'm not surprised...

Hawkins: So that's, that's what we're up against. And you know, the Greens in those battleground states. They don't want us to abandon them. They got fights going on...

Albert: Why is it abandoning? That's the thing I don't get. Explain this to me. So in 40 states, there's no issue. So in a swing state, you go in and you say, I'm going to campaign up and down, same as I would in a safe state for Green candidates in the state. I'm also going to campaign for the Green program. But I'm going to say to folks, I think people should vote for Biden in this swing state for president, but the rest of the Green Party slate down the whole ticket, because of the undeniable fact that I see – I being you in this case, I would hope – that Trump winning again would usher in hellish days well beyond those already endured, if not worse, still. So, Trump winning is a very, very, very serious problem. And as annoying and damaging as it is for us not to get votes for president in this swing state, it's much more annoying for Trump to win here, win the electoral college here, and win the election as a result, and I won't risk that. So I'm campaigning for the Green program. I'm campaigning for socialism. I'm campaigning for the Green Party up and down the line, but I'm campaigning to stop Trump at the presidential level. Why is your saying that selling out the Green Party? Why is it folding up your tent. I don't get that.

Hawkins: Well, I mean, how do you campaign for a Green New Deal and socialism and say vote for Biden? I mean, he's not gonna do those things. He's opposed to those things. If we got life or death issues, you know, the climate crisis, the

Coronavirus crisis, inequality is killing us, working class living standards are going down...

Albert: All true...

Hawkins: And we got a new nuclear arms race too, and they're not talking about it. And so for us to fold up our tents in the battleground states takes the pressure off Biden, if he's going to move at all. And look Biden should landslide Trump. Trump is so damn inept, his own people are seeing it. And you know, they got the money. They got the lead in enrollment and to blame us for not beating Trump, Trump is like the most unpopular unfavorably, you know, the polls say he's the highest unfavorable for anybody ever running for president. I mean, why put it on us to beat Trump when the Democrats ought the landslide them?

Albert: I don't get the argument. The issue isn't what should happen ideally. Ideally, of course, Trump should get annihilated. Ideally, Sanders should have destroyed him. All true. The issue is what happens if it comes down to it, and it's close in the contested or swing or I think you called them battleground states. If it comes to that situation, then there's a real issue. It shouldn't be an issue. I agree with you. But there is an issue. And if there's an issue, again, well, here's a different version of it.

Why not advocate voting for Biden in swing states and the rest of the Green Party's slate down the ticket and supporting the party program and supporting the Green New Deal, not based on Biden's non-existent merits, there are none. But because Trump winning would accelerate the race to destroy the environment that sustains organized life. It might even reach irreversible tipping points in one four year span. And there would be mounting and hideous catastrophes along the way primarily for the poor, abroad and at home. So why not say to your constituency we need to stop that, and the way to stop that, given how close it is, is to hold our nose and vote for Biden

and after the 10 minutes of voting for Biden to put on our working shoes and oppose his administration, hopefully on all the grounds that you know, you know, so well. I don't see how that's folding up tents. And the word isn't pragmatic here. The word isn't conservative. The word is aggressive about accomplishing the most possible for the constituencies that are at stake. How is that wrong?

Hawkins: Well, Trump may call climate change a hoax. But Biden acts as if it's a hoax. The status quo is not going to advance. And for us to not, you know, compete for that vote is to take away our political leverage. And these are the people that you look, the Democrats, we talked about voter suppression. And the Republicans do a lot of it. We know how they do it, you know, voter ID and not enough polling places in certain communities and all that nonsense. The Democrats suppressed the vote by keeping the Green Party off the vote. I mean, I go back to New York. We had our congressional candidates file petitions right before the lockdown, and then the DNC with that law firm that's close to Clinton. I forget their name. They filed in court saying we're filing challenges to the signatures. But we don't want the board of election to review the challenges because of the Coronavirus and therefore just keep the Green Party off the ballot. I mean, that's the kind of nonsense we get from them.

Albert: I am not surprised.

Hawkins: Yeah. And so look, there's another issue here, this spoiler problem, which we're talking about right now. There's a solution to that, which the Green Party has been giving to the democrats for 20 years. It's a non partisan, proven solution. And that's get rid of the electoral college and have a rank choice national popular vote for president.

Albert: Absolutely.

Hawkins: And if we aren't in the race, and putting that

pressure on Biden to maybe get behind it, it's not even gonna be raised.

Albert: Howie, you can't really believe that. I agree with you and I think it's worse than you're even saying because you're a really nice guy. I can see Democrats sitting around and saying, fuck the Greens, screw the Greens. Who cares about the Greens? I can easily understand that. Okay, so we don't have to keep repeating that they have problems? Of course they do. The issue is, is there a gap a very, very substantial human, just humanly destructive gap between them and Trump, between them and the emergence of fascist movements in the United States. That's something I've never said in my whole life, but it is real now. Right? These things are real. And to, you know, make believe that as bad as he is, Biden and given the constituencies he appeals to, isn't better than Trump, less dangerous than Trump, less of a possibility of terminal nuclear war and global warming and all the rest of it than Trump, makes no sense to me. But there's another thing. Leverage? Howie, you don't have any leverage at the national level. No one does with Trump. With Biden, there is real leverage. It's not as big as we want by any means. Because we don't even want the system. But it's there. Trump, if Trump wins, your leverage is zero. The leverage of the global warming, you know, the climate change movement is zero. The amount of activism that would be necessary to accomplish the most meager thing given the Supreme Court and all of the other courts, if Trump wins, is enormous, but the potential for pushing Biden is real. The leverage argument doesn't doesn't do much for me either. You know, maybe I'm dense here, but I don't get it.

Hawkins: Well, we'll definitely have more leverage over Biden, if we get a substantial vote, than over Trump, no doubt about that. But look, whoever's in there, we got to have mass movements that aren't tied to either party. I mean, I go back to the anti Vietnam War movement, and contrast it with the

anti Iraq war movement. In the 60s, we were saying out now, we are saying that to Kennedy and McCarthy who were talking about negotiations, we said it to Humphrey and Nixon. And we later learned that, you know, the massive demonstrations in the fall of 69 convinced Nixon and Kissinger that their secret plan to end the war, which involved tactical nukes in North Vietnam, would lead to, if not only his, he couldn't get reelected, maybe even a revolution. That's what they were afraid of, because they saw so many people out in the streets.

Albert: I agree.

Hawkins: So that's what we got a mount now. What the mistake I think was made in the anti Iraq war movement is, you know, the broad coalition United for Peace and Justice came out with a slogan that year of against the Bush agenda, which was implicitly saying get behind Kerry, who was pro war. Kerry was saying I can fight it better than Bush. The movement lost its independent message. And then, you know, when Obama got elected, they figured, well, the Democrats are in there so we can go home. And Obama continued all these wars.

Albert: I don't have any argument with any of that. I agree with you. But I'm not saying that, and neither are the people who, you know, Chomsky isn't saying that, people who are for fundamental change in the United States, for the same kinds of changes that you're for, are able to say, and we don't understand why some others aren't, that there is a circumstance under which it makes sense to vote Biden, or to vote for the Democrat against the Republican.

So let me ask you a different kind of question and maybe we'll move this off the spot we're on. Suppose Trump, this is not gonna happen. But suppose for the sake of discussion, that Trump said the first thing I'm going to do in my second term is declare war on Iran. And the second thing I'm going to do is declare war on any country that in any way, aids or trades with or deals with Iran. Now, under those circumstances, I

assume that you would vote for Biden or anybody. Am I right?

Hawkins: Well, you're assuming the Democrats would fight Trump on that. I mean, look at Venezuela. You know, Trump is trying to take them out. And you know, Biden is with him. Schumer's with him. I think we can't rely on the democrats to fight for our right.

Albert: Why is it relying on them to say I'd rather have Biden in office than Trump, by a ton, BUT, I have to devote myself to fighting Biden if he's in office. That's not relying on them.

Hawkins: Yeah, I would rather have Biden than Trump, but, as the Green Party presidential candidate it's not my role to campaign for Biden. You know, the people that nominate me want me to campaign for our party, get our ballot lines, fight for our issues, they want to advance the Green Party, to advance our issues and make whoever's in office have to deal with, you know, our movement.

Albert: And I agree with that as an agenda. But what I'm trying to suggest is that a lot of people think that advancing Green Party issues, advancing Green Party program, even advancing the Green Party itself, right, depends upon beating Trump far more than it depends upon getting some more votes in 10 battleground states. I'm saying I think it doesn't make sense not just from the point of view of the future of the country, but even from the point of view of the future of the Green Party. I don't see why you can't go into a state and say, fight, fight, fight for the Green program, right, and part of that fight is stopping Trump, and the next part of that fight is going to be pushing as hard as we can with those mass movements, like from the 60s that you mentioned, against Biden. How is that selling out the Green Party?

Hawkins: Well, if you're fighting for the Green program and saying vote for Biden, you're contradicting yourself. So just...

Albert: No you are not.

Hawkins: Biden said he would veto Medicare For All if it came across his desk.

Albert: Okay.

Hawkins: You got so many people that can't get treatment when they needed a to make a choice between rent and going to the doctor.

Albert: Exactly.

Hawkins: The guy that lived downstairs from me had to pay his utility built into March last year. He's on Medicaid. He's supposed to get kidney medicine. He didn't get it that month. And his kidneys failed. He died. That's happening all over the place.

Albert: Exactly.

Hawkins: And the Democrats oppose a public healthcare system that everybody has access to, and for us to say vote for the guy that is opposed to that is a total hypocrisy on our part. How can we go around saying that?

Albert: Why? Why can't you say – I'm really trying to understand Howie – why can't you say Biden is a criminal. Biden is a supporter and a maintainer of and then you can list all the things that we agree on, right? But stopping Trump is absolutely essential to moving forward as a first step. And so in 40 states, I'm running for Green Party votes, Howie Hawkins votes, etc. But in 10 states, or whatever it turns out to be, I'm running for Green Party advance. I'm running for the Green Party candidates. I'm running for the Green Party program. But I think people no matter how much we hate the Democratic Party and Biden should vote for them, but with the intent of, after the 10 minutes voting going out in the street, and demonstrating for four years against their administration to

get as much as we can possibly win. There is nothing confusing about it. Nobody would see that and say, ah, Howie is for Biden. Who's gonna say that? When Howie is in the street opposing Biden...

Hawkins: But saying in that state vote for him?

Albert: Yes....

Hawkins: Yeah...

Albert: In order to stop Trump from winning...

Hawkins: There are lots of people like you that are going to be making that argument and voters on the left are going to know what the arguments are. It's not my role as the Green Party candidate, a nominee, the people that nominated me to go out and say vote for the Democratic candidate where whether we have a ballot line going forward depends on the vote we get.

Albert: So you're saying the ballot line is more important – and I agree that it's important – but you're saying it's more important than Biden beating Trump in the election because in that state not beating him might swing the election, and so my getting the ballot line for the Greens is more important than our all together stopping Trump. I can't – do you, do you really feel that?

Hawkins: Yeah, because you're assuming we are the margin of difference, which is a big assumption. In the meantime, we got issues. We got issues with the Democrats that we're fighting as well as the Republicans in these States. And people want a ballot line so they can run against them in the next election. And that's what the people in those states are focused on. You know, whether it's fighting pipelines, affordable housing, the regressive, I mean, we got a tax system now where labor income gets taxed higher than capital income. And the Democrats, you know, they voted enthusiastically for the Reagan tax cuts and started the whole thing back in 86. That was bipartisan. I

mean, everywhere we turn, it's bipartisan. It is bipartisan foreign policy, bipartisan economic neoliberalism that's killing us.

Albert: I agree. In other words, you're arguing a position and points which I agree with, right? And which Chomsky agrees with, you know, everybody who takes the view that in swing states, one should vote for the lesser evil in this case, with a gigantic evilness gap, so to speak. Everybody who, who, who is saying that, that I respect and agree with, agrees with you about all this other stuff, we just don't understand how it leads to an act which could, could, just could elect Trump. I mean, last time around the reality is that in a few swing states, if Jill Stein had done what I'm suggesting, and if, and these are all ifs, I agree with you, and if the people who voted for Jill Stein, as a result voted for Hillary Clinton, holding their nose, furious, nauseous, going home and vomiting, nonetheless, it would have meant that Trump lost. It was enough votes. It's just a fact. The numbers are there, right?

Hawkins: But you're assuming her voters would have voted for Clinton in the absence of Stein? If they did, okay, but the fact is, we bring people to the polls who won't vote for either party. 61% of Stein's voters according to the exit polls would have stayed home if she wasn't on the ballot. Others would have voted for somebody besides Clinton or Trump.

Albert: And if Howie Hawkins in those states, right, was using his considerable talents to explain, to consciousness raise, to explain to those Green Party supporters and Howie Hawkins supporters, that the current context is one in which doing that, doing what you're saying Stein's voters would have done, is a mistake, is a horrible, horrible mistake that would lead to tremendous dislocation and harm, if not total disaster, if Howie Hawkins was making that point, and Stein certainly wasn't, I think he would be heard by those voters. The whole point is you, you're able to bring them out. In other words,

they respect you. They're listening. They're hearing. You can communicate with them. Howie, it seems to me, honestly, that in your life, there's never going to be a moment at which you have more capacity, personally, as an individual, to impact history, then in this election in the manner I'm talking about. That's how big the choice seems to me to be. Now it might be that we get to August and there's no choice at all. It's obvious, because Biden is destroying Trump or because vice versa. But if it's close Your potential for doing something historic is immense. And you're saying you don't want to do that because you'll lose a ballot line for the Green Party which you can get by a petition anyway. I can't follow it.

Hawkins: Well, to the extent people have, you know, respect for what I'm saying it's because I'm saying we need an alternative to these two capitalist parties.

Albert: Agreed.

Hawkins: So, if I stopped saying that, I lose some respect, I won't have the influence I had.

Albert: But you don't need to stop saying that.

Hawkins: Yeah. But if I'm saying vote for one of those parties, that's an obvious contradiction.

Albert: Is it? Do you think Noam Chomsky lost the respect of leftists who don't support either party because he said, you know...

Hawkins: Some people, yes.

Albert: They're crazy. You know, somebody who would, who would lose their respect for you on these grounds. Good, Lord.

Hawkins: Well, you know, I think he's lost some influence with some people. People who think, you know, going with that lesser evil strategy is wrong. And, you know...

Albert: And that's why they quote him when they explain why they don't support either of the two parties, which they do.

Hawkins: The people against the lesser evil quote him on that question.

Albert: Yeah, they quote him on, you know, Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The two parties are two branches of one corporate party. Sure they would. I guess the bottom line is we have to agree to disagree, although I continue to have trouble understanding why, I really do.

Hawkins: Yeah, well, I know, no loss of friendship or disrespect. I mean, we've been debating this since 2004. So, you know, the thing I keep emphasizing when this comes up is we are going to demand that, and this is a demand on the Democratic Party because they could make this an issue. Get rid of the Electoral College, and go to a national popular vote...

Albert: Couldn't agree more.

Hawkins: And, you know, the only time it came up a little bit was when Elizabeth Warren said we should abolish the electoral college about a year ago. And, you know, nobody's picked it up. Not even Bernie Sanders. So, you know, the fact that people are focused on me, like you are on this question, gives me an opportunity to say, Well, okay, you want to solve this problem for good? Let's have a national popular vote using ranked choice voting. That that's something that, you know, Biden can avoid.

Albert: I agree. I mean, I absolutely agree. I just don't think that what I'm suggesting, prevents that. I don't even think it reduces ...

Hawkins: I'll grant you that a lot of people, if it is close in November, are going to accept your argument in swing states. And, but that's not my role as candidate of the Green

Party. You know, That's not why they nominated me. So I'm not going to shame or scold people that make that choice when it comes to that. Although right now, I mean, Trump is hanging himself with this inept response to the Coronavirus crisis.

Albert: Have you seen his most recent polls?

Hawkins: The last ones I've seen is he's losing the battleground states to Biden. And his favorables went up for a minute like people rallied around the president and then they saw what he was doing, and he went back down.

Albert: And it went back up yesterday or the day before it was back up to high forties again. It's incredible. But I think there's a reason for it. I mean, maybe we can talk about something different because I wonder how you think about this. I think that Trump is not an idiot. He's almost a genius at the limited thing that he does, which is to lie and you know, all the rest of it in order to win. Just to win. And I think what he's doing now, and I wonder what you think about this, because you travel around and you know, is that the reality is lots and lots of people are much more scared of unemployment, of hunger, of other diseases, of literally starvation, of the indignity of it all, than they are of the virus. And understandably, so I have a lot of sympathy for that. And Trump is trying to take advantage of that. And to put himself on the side of that. Of course, later, if it leads to a gigantic fiasco, he'll say that he never supported it at all. But you know, he's doing a reasonably good job of that. You pointed out a lot of things that the liberals should be saying, would you agree that they should be emphasizing really strongly that the economy collapsing is a serious issue, that the economy denying people income is a serious issue, it's a world, you know, an incredibly important issue and therefore, the demand for raising unemployment insurance, the demand for giving people income while they're out of work and all the other good demands have to be elevated far more strongly than they are. And that they should be appealing to those exact

same crowds of people who are now asking, you know, to go back, to shut off the shut off, to open up the country. They should be appealing to those people saying you shouldn't have to risk your life to get an income, you shouldn't have to risk your life, you know, to get health care, those things should be provided and the obstacle is Donald Trump.

Hawkins: Well, where's Biden? I mean, he's not making those demands that there's such an opportunity. I mean, Trump is telling people to go out and die for the Dow. And you know, the progressive Democrats have some good bills in there like cancel rent and mortgage payments. Cancel utility shut offs. Have the federal government pay those so that the small business sector doesn't all go bankrupt, which is where half the jobs are, just like they're doing that in Europe, where the hell is Biden? I mean, you got the platform. And he's not saying that. He's not supporting Sanders, you know, \$2,000 per adult, and \$500 per child. He's not saying everybody needs COVID treatment, get covered by Medicare. That treatment is \$35,000 If you go to hospital and up to \$85,000, if you get on one of those ventilators. Where the hell is Biden? I mean, that's – you are right – Trump, if that's why he got a rebound, it's because there's no counter narrative.

Albert: I agree, and and therefore pushing on this, you, me, everybody, makes sense as well as on other things. I agree. But I am really scared that the left liberal and radical left is making almost exactly the same mistake as in 2016 when it says Trump should get annihilated, you know, Trumps should get annihilated, he's gonna lose easily. It's just not recognizing what he is appealing to, and how effectively he manages to do it. I know that sounds weird, but it is true.

Hawkins: Well, he lost the popular vote by 3 million in 2016. Let's not forget that. And he had a unique situation with the electoral college which gave him the victory. There are a whole lot of factors. Black voter suppression was huge. And the Democrats haven't been all that vigorous on that. And the

electoral college. Those are the things – you know, to say we gotta support Biden in the swing states when they haven't even fought for their own interests on those questions, you know, it's not my responsibility.

Albert: Well I guess we are going to have to agree to disagree. I think your role is to advance the well being of the population and the world. I think we would agree on that. And your role is to, in that context, since you believe in the Green Party, which seems perfectly reasonable to me, to also advance Green Party policy and Green Party aims. I agree on that. What we disagree on is that I think stopping Trump is central to all those agendas. Far more so than your getting some more votes in swing states.

Hawkins: Yes, well, I have been saying the Democrats should impeach Trump a long time ago – and he has a mile long rap sheet – and they finally at the end chose the Ukraine extortion, abuse of power, and obstruction of Congress. But then when they presented the case it was more a national security issue about the proxy war in the Ukraine than Trump's obstruction, and abuse of power. They gave him a get out of jail card.

Albert: Yes, it is insane. And now what's Biden doing. He's making believe that he is tougher on China than Trump. Okay. All insane. All disgusting. I mean how much worse can it be? How much more hypocritical, how much more decrepit – I mean I agree with you. I do Howie. But there is still a gigantic gap between a Trump second term in which he is just totally empowered, and we can see what he is willing to do to get a third term – and a Biden first term.

I guess one thing we have to hope for is that maybe Biden will pick Warren as Vice President, or maybe someone will impose on Biden Warren as Vice Presidential choice. I doubt it, but it is possible. She now leads all the polls. She very substantially leads all the other potential Vice Presidential

candidates.

Hawkins: Yeah, that's not surprising. The base of the Democratic Party is way more progressive than the leadership. That's why Bernie Sanders, you know, people say he created this movement and in a way he gave voice to sentiments that were already there, like Medicare for all. I mean the polls have shown the people have wanted that in a majority going back to Truman. And Bernie was able to give voice to that and scare the hell out of the Democratic establishment, twice.

Albert: Yes, and it's an incredible loss that he's not the nominee. And it is very disturbing how that happened. I agree with you. Alright, well Howie, unless there is something else you want to add, something that we haven't addressed or covered, and I admit, I apologize for focusing in on one main issue – but if there is something else you'd like to talk about now before we close it out, go right ahead.

Hawkins: I would just say, you know this Coronavirus – people don't realize what a dangerous situation we are in. This is out of a family of viruses that includes the common cold for which we have never developed long-term immunity. So you can get infected but it is not clear you will have immunity for the long term, and we have no vaccine for. So we are in for a whole new world which means we gotta change how we work. OSHA should have personal protection equipment standard, emergency and then long term, so people can go back to work with some safety. And what that means for the economy – I mean this is a much more serious crisis than I think some people realize because they kind of think this is going to pass. That's Trump's gamble. He is sending people back to work and if this thing ramps up again – and it really hasn't ramped down – it could blow up in his face. Worst is the number of people that are going to be made sick and die. And so, you know, I think we need to really think about how we are going to get out of this situation, or what it means for the way we gotta change not just how we live, but the system. I think we can't go with

the system we got where with the virus SARS 1, they stopped working on the vaccine when they suppressed that epidemic – and had they continued, that would have helped with developing a vaccine here. So, I am just saying we are in a very serious situation.

Albert: I think you are absolutely right. I have been far more afraid of this, I guess you might say, I don't know what words to use – than a lot of folks. And I think you pinpoint the issue. The issue is the extent to which when you get the virus and you overcome it, you then have immunity. And we don't know that that is the case, so that is a huge issue. And then the idea that we are going to have a vaccine in a year or a year and a half – I think the last successful vaccine took many many years – I heard forty. AIDS still doesn't have a vaccine. So it's not obvious that this won't be with us in the same way the seasonal flu is with us, except that it is more virulent, it spreads faster, and it obviously is more damaging in the sense of killing people. So, I agree with you that it is worrisome, and then just ask yourself what it would be like, or I ask the audience to ask yourself, what it would be like to have Trump in office again, plus Corona returning, and him ridiculing science, ridiculing public safety, and, I don't know, hunkering down in the basement of the White House or whatever he is going to do.

Hawkins: Yeah, and pitting every state against the rest instead of having a unified response. And pitting our nation against every other nation. I mean you couldn't have a worse response.

Albert: Yes, it's hard to imagine. Alright, Howie, thank you a whole lot for coming on. I really appreciate it and maybe we can do it again sometime later in the summer when things, I don't know, hopefully shake out for the better. I guess we will see.

Hawkins: Yes, we will see and I would love to come back on and

talk about it all some more.

Albert: Okay. That said, then, this is Mike Albert signing off until next time for RevolutionZ.

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