Thinking About the Election

August 4, 2016



As the U.S. election season proceeds, there is controversy, confusion, consternation, and sometimes recrimination. Below, in a question and answer format, we present our views on these matters, hoping to contribute to the discussion.

1. *Who are Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?*

Trump is a narcissistic, violent, lying, racist, misogynistic, ultra-nationalist bully. He says whatever he calculates will best promote himself. Is he a racist thug? Yes. Does he advocate total state control on behalf of private owners? Not yet. Is he a Mussolini in the making? Maybe.

Hillary Clinton is a leading representative of the neoliberal wing of the capitalist class and has helped move the Democratic Party from New Deal liberalism to pro-corporate liberalism. She is beholden to wealth and power and Sanders was correct to call her the candidate of Wall Street.

Yet as horrible as adherence to wealth and power is, it is unclear why many people see Clinton as massively worse than Obama or her husband, say. Clinton was one of the more liberal Democrats in the Senate, yet some progressives claim they prefer Reagan or even Trump over her. Perhaps these people are first discovering the horrors hiding behind fuzzy Democratic Party rhetoric. Or perhaps they are first directly experiencing the massive obstacle to fundamental change that is our corporate system, and their fury at that system is directed at Clinton alone rather than at her but also more widely.

2. *How does the Democratic platform compare with the Republican platform and should we care?*

That party platforms and campaign promises are routinely violated is undeniable. Yet, even so, specific campaign pledges are often kept and members of Congress often vote in accord with their party platforms. The key determinant, though, is whether political pressure is brought to bear to compel compliance.

This year, the Sanders forces had substantial input into the Democratic platform. They didn't get the language they sought on a bunch of issues, and on some (especially Palestine), they got nothing. But the document is still one of the most progressive in Party history:

- a $15 an hour minimum wage, pegged to inflation (remember when that was a major left demand?)
- working families should not pay any tuition to go to public colleges and universities,
- 50 percent of the country's electricity should come from clean energy sources within a decade,

- federal legislation to protect the LGBT community from discrimination and transgender folks from violence,

- repeal the Hyde amendment, which bans federal funds for abortion,

- comprehensive immigration reform providing a path to citizenship for those without legal documents and in the meantime defending executive actions to prevent the deportation of DREAMers, parents of citizens, and lawful permanent residents, and an end to raids and roundups of children and families,

- end mass incarceration, reform mandatory minimum sentences, close private prisons and detention centers, expand re-entry programs, require body cameras, stop the use of weapons of war in urban communities, end racial profiling, require the Department of Justice to investigate all questionable or suspicious police-involved shootings, end capital punishment, end the hypercriminalization of marijuana.

Contrast that with the GOP platform, one of the most reactionary in history, which calls for a wall across the Mexican border, no amnesties, treating illegal immigrants as a major source of violent crimes; no abortions, even in cases of rape or women's health; abolishing tenure; abstinence-only sex education; repealing the Affordable Care Act; characterizing coal as a "clean" energy source; a gay rights section that the Log Cabin Republicans called "the most anti-LGBT platform in the party's 162-year history"; ending the Attorney General's "campaign of harassment against police forces"; condemning the Supreme Court's erosion of the death penalty; and eliminating the federal minimum wage.

Both platforms reflect a fundamental commitment to capitalist values. Nonetheless the differences they reveal in the two parties and the two likely emerging administrations would have significant human consequences.

3. *But given Clinton's connections to the energy industry, aren't the differences between Clinton and Trump on climate only cosmetic?*

Clinton and the Democratic Party platform recognize climate change as an "urgent threat" and commit to addressing it. Clinton says she will "install half a billion solar panels by the end of her first term, cut tax subsidies to oil and gas companies," and "deliver on the pledge President Obama made at the Paris climate conference—without relying on climate deniers in Congress to pass new legislation." She will "reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 percent in 2025 relative to 2005 levels…."

The words "up to" are disturbing, but compare them with Trump, who considers climate change a hoax, or with the Republican platform which proposes "to shift responsibility for environmental regulation from the federal bureaucracy to the states" and "to transform the EPA into an independent bipartisan commission." They reject "both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement," and refer to the "illusion of an environmental crisis." They want to revive the Keystone pipeline.

Some ask why it matters whether we are killed immediately or more slowly. What matters is that the longer timeline offered by the Clinton policies gives us time to build a movement able to win the environmental policies we really need.

If Trump wins and seeks to abolish the EPA, abrogate the Clean Power Plan, and scuttle the Paris Climate Agreement, climate activists will certainly oppose him. But that is the point. To have Trump in office means next year's organizing will be fighting to prevent or undo horrendous backsliding

instead of seeking positive new gains.

4. *Given Clinton and the Democrats' support for "free trade agreements," would Trump be better for American workers than Clinton?*

Technological change and the industrialization of the Third World will inevitably affect employment in the United States. The left insists that the costs of those shifts be shared as fairly and as democratically as possible. What's objectionable about TPP and the other "free trade agreements" is not that they promote trade, but that they give too much power and benefit to corporations and that they are not accompanied by domestic policies that equitably redistribute the costs and benefits.

Trump has not put forward any policies that would address the redistribution problem. Blocking TPP, but then pursuing other policies that shift income upward will not help the non-college-educated working class victims of globalization.

On the minimum wage, Trump recently took "three different positions … in less than 30 seconds," but the most generous of them was two-thirds of what the Democratic Party platform calls for (an increase to $15 an hour over time, pegged to inflation). The Republican platform sees the minimum wage as "an issue that should be handled at the state and local level," calls for the repeal of the Davis-Bacon law, which mandates the payment of prevailing wages on federally-funded construction projects, and supports anti-union Right to Work laws.

On tax policy, Citizens for Tax Justice commented: "Trump's tax plan would represent an unprecedented shift of income to the wealthy, while taking away substantial income and public services from the overwhelming majority of Americans."

The tax provisions in the GOP platform, said Citizens for Tax Justice, "would exacerbate the dual problems of rising inequality and continuous annual federal budget deficits with tax cuts that essentially put more money into the pockets of wealthy people and corporations and reduce federal revenues."

The Republican Platform also opposes the Dodd-Frank regulations, and especially the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Trump himself told the New York Times that he prefers using non-union labor.

In contrast, Democrats offer modest steps to address inequality: make the rich pay their fair share of taxes ("In terms of tax justice," observed Citizens for Tax Justice, "this year's Democratic platform is one of the party's most progressive in modern history"), make it easier to form unions, raise the minimum wage, and oppose Right to Work laws.

The rich have a decisive role in Clinton's Democratic Party, but even limited differences between the parties will translate into significant differences in people's lives.

5. *How would Trump and Clinton differ on court appointments? Does it even matter?*

The next President will likely make four Supreme Court appointments who will adjudicate for decades. When Trump says he will choose justices in the image of Antonin Scalia, we can assume he will. Some of Bill Clinton and Obama's nominees have been centrist but have voted with the liberal bloc on many crucial close decisions.

Decisions on immigration, reproductive rights, affirmative action, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, campaign financing, and corporate power all matter, and so different appointments to the Court matter too. Social movements, of course, are needed to generate real change, but the more

reactionary the Court, the tougher their job.

6. *Is Clinton more likely to pursue war than Trump?*

Bernie Sanders rightly criticized Clinton's 2002 vote for the Iraq war. But despite Trump's claims, there's no evidence he opposed that war before it began. His one documented pre-war opinion was his answer to a September 2002 question from Howard Stern on whether he supported going to war. He replied “Yeah, I guess so.” In 2011 Trump told an interviewer that smart people said the Iraq war was about taking over the oil, but “unfortunately, Bush didn't have that in mind.”

Trump also supported the 2011 campaign to depose Qaddafi in Libya — though he criticized U.S. policy on the grounds that support for the rebels should have been conditioned on their agreeing to give us 50 percent of their oil.

Clinton has hawkish inclinations and a hawkish record, and has surrounded herself with hawkish advisers (including neocons like Robert Kagan). She worked to undermine democracy in Honduras and pursued provocative policies toward Russia. The jingoism at the Democratic Convention was repulsive, but familiar. However, Trump's America Firstism is not pacifism. He's called for sending 30,000 troops to fight ISIS (and won't rule out the use of nuclear weapons against them). He wants bombing that kills the family members of ISIS members (noting that Obama has been fighting a very “politically-correct” war), waterboarding and worse, and he favors barring Muslims.

Trump proposes a 45 percent punitive tariff on China that will surely exacerbate tensions with that major power, and says he wants to bolster U.S. military forces in the tense South China Sea to give the United States a stronger bargaining position.

Clinton may or may not ignore the terms of the Iran nuclear deal and use sanctions to try to extract further concessions from Iran. Trump has said his “number-one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran.” The Republican platform says they don't recognize the agreement as binding.

Trump has called for building up the U.S. military and accused Obama of allowing the U.S. nuclear arsenal to “atrophy.” ”The Trump doctrine is simple,” declared The Donald. “It’s strength. It’s strength. Nobody is going to mess with us. Our military will be made stronger.”

In April 2016, Trump warned that, “Our military is depleted, and we’re asking our generals and military leaders to worry about global warming. We will spend what we need to rebuild our military. It is the cheapest investment we can make. We will develop, build, and purchase the best equipment known to mankind. Our military dominance must be unquestioned.”

Obama proposed a trillion dollar nuclear modernization program. Clinton submissively said she had to look into the matter, but now the Democratic platform urges “work to reduce excessive spending on nuclear weapons-related programs that are projected to cost $1 trillion.”

The GOP platform, on the other hand, echoes Trump's claim that Obama and Clinton have weakened the U.S. military. It denounces them for neglecting U.S. strategic weapons, for signing an inappropriate arms control agreement with Russia, and for moving to normalize relations with Cuba.

Some on the left have been delighted at the fact that Trump has seemed to question several of the mainstays of U.S. foreign policy, especially its non-proliferation policy and the NATO alliance. But telling Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia that the United States is no longer going to bear the expense of their defense and that it would be fine if they wanted to acquire nuclear weapons is precisely the sort of policy that could lead to out-of-control nuclear arms races in East Asia and the

Middle East. And saying he might not defend one of the new Baltic NATO members until he had checked whether they had “fulfilled their obligations to us” is not a peace policy but the replacement of a provocative military alliance with a gun-for-hire arrangement.

And doesn't having a racist megalomaniac's hand on the nuclear trigger present a real danger?

7. *Is Clinton terrible on Palestine? What about Trump?*

Although the Democratic Party platform did adopt some of Bernie's positions on important issues, on Israel-Palestine the document refused to condemn the occupation, condemn the settlements, or call for any pressure on Israel to move toward peace. In conformity to Hillary's promise to Israel-apologist billionaire Haim Saban, the platform even says the Party will “oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations or through the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement.”

The platform pays lip service to the two-state solution, but by saying it must be “negotiated directly by the parties,” it is essentially saying that Washington will apply zero pressure to bring that solution about (and will guarantee Israel's “qualitative military edge”).

As awful as this Democratic platform section is, the Republican's is even worse. It does not even pretend to support a two-state solution, explicitly rejecting the view that Israel is an occupier. The word Palestinian does not appear in the entire document — except for one clause demanding that the United States immediately halt funding to the UN's climate body because it grants Palestinians membership as a state. It calls for “no daylight between America and Israel” and guarantees Israel a qualitative military edge. It recognizes “Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish state” and calls for the American embassy to be moved there. It denounces the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement as anti-Semitic and calls for legislation to prevent the boycotting of Israel or “the Israeli-controlled territories.”

In February 2016, Trump said that the United States should remain “neutral” between Israel and the Palestinians so as to be in a position to broker a deal between the two sides. But he quickly withdrew that, saying that “Palestinians must come to the table knowing that the bond between the United States and Israel is absolutely, totally unbreakable,” that he would move the U.S. embassy to “the eternal capital of the Jewish people,” Jerusalem, and that Hillary Clinton and Obama had “treated Israel very, very badly.”

In May 2016, Trump went even further, declaring that Israel should just “keep moving forward” in building settlements in the occupied territories. U.S. pressure on Israel to stop settlement expansion — which Washington used to call illegal — has generally been non-existent, but this is the first time a presidential candidate has urged them to build more. Trump has been endorsed by billionaire Sheldon Adelson, a leading supporter of Israel’s right-wing government, who says he believes that Trump “will be good for Israel.”

Both parties' positions on Israel-Palestine are terrible, with Trump's being more so. But this is an example of how one can press on issues before and after the election, totally independent of how one votes in November. Many groups supporting Palestinian rights were out in the streets during the Democratic Convention trying to appeal to the strong sentiment among rank-and-file Democrats who are far more progressive on this issue than are the Party leaders. They were working and will continue to work on changing the conversation on Palestine, quite apart from those ten minutes in November.

8. *Does the fact that Clinton is a woman matter?*

Yes, a woman becoming president is an undeniable step forward, and, other things equal, it should be enough to decide one's vote. But of course other things are never equal.

If Trump was a woman, and Clinton a man, and everything else was unchanged, that one positive for Ms. Trump would not override her incredible negatives. Or consider Sanders versus Clinton. Clinton being a woman was certainly a factor in her favor, but not remotely enough to sway most progressives toward supporting her over Sanders — and rightly so.

That said, the effects of having a woman president will be profound for young girls and women — and for young boys, too.

And of course, on the other side of the issue, it isn't just that Trump isn't a woman. It is that he is incredibly misogynist and in office would cause feminists to have to battle violent reaction rather than pursue liberation.

9. *Does it matter for future activism whether Clinton or Trump becomes President?*

Yes, in two main ways. First, in reacting to protests Trump would be far more aggressive than Clinton and encourage local police to be far more repressive. Indeed, Trump would implicitly, and maybe even explicitly, welcome citizen vigilantes to violently repress resistance in a throwback to the days of the "hard hat riots" against anti-war protestors in 1970, or even to KKK tactics against anti-racist organizers.

Second, imagine it is Election Day plus one. You wake up. Clinton won. Sanders is building a new organization called "Our Revolution." Movements are eager to pursue positive aims they have been elaborating. There is no honeymoon for Hillary, there is activism for society. The focus of protest is government, the two parties, and corporations. The overriding concern is attaining positive gains and moving toward implementing Sanders' policies and then more.

Or, you wake up, Trump won. Racism surges. Sexism explodes. People of good will are shell-shocked. Movements scramble to find voice and form to oppose a drastic shift rightward. Activists prepare to battle to preserve what with Clinton in office they would have been trying to transcend. The focus of protest is Trump, his policies, and repression. Positive aspirations are back-burnered by the urgency to prevent gruesome reaction and even fascistic violence. The overriding concern is survival, repelling reaction, and getting back to what is remembered as the relative sanity of Obama/Clinton.

10. *But couldn't a victory of the greater evil hasten progressive change?*

Going backward to go forward makes sense when retreat leads to a short cut to leap ahead. But a path forward from a Trump-led society would lead right back through some Democrat, maybe even Clinton herself. It would entail four, eight, or more years delay, and also the massive pain that a Trump administration would impose on people, not to mention the delay in addressing global warming and all that that might mean.

Has any labor organizer ever wished owners would cut salaries or worsen conditions so that labor can leap forward? Has any anti-war organizer, feminist organizer, anti-racist organizer, or other organizer called upon the establishment to make things much worse in order to arrive at much better? Of course not, and for good reason.

11. But didn't the neoliberal Democratic Party pave the way for Trump, and wouldn't having more liberals in office now mean more "Trumps" later?

Yes, Democratic Party policies, particularly paying little attention to the declining income, feelings of alienation, horrendous health care, and even the plummeting lifespan of white working people, have been central to Trump's rise, as has the Democrat's unwillingness to actually comprehend and relate to working class issues in a remotely sincere fashion.

And yes, having Clinton in office with no effective opposition to force better policies and develop lasting movements, could lead to a still worse and still more effective "Trump" running in the future, particularly if Clinton wins via a campaign that effectively ignores white workers and really all workers as workers, leaving them feeling even more estranged and angry than now.

But who proposes that scenario? And why should we expect it? If Clinton wins she will immediately confront not only an electorate and especially an activist community that will fight for change, but even inside her own Party a seriously divided base with much and perhaps even most of it leaning at least somewhat left, including toward developing working class ties and program.

On the other hand, if Trump wins, he will operate in a Party that backs his most aggressive choices, is utterly disdainful of all opposition, and is also hell bent on delivering a worse "Trump" later.

Regarding its operational lesson, and perhaps even the stakes we face, it is relevant to note that Hitler surely arose from the terrible failures of the German capitalist and social democratic parties to deal with the Depression, but that doesn't mean it was sensible for progressives to refuse an alliance with the social democrats to stop Hitler.

> 12. *What is Trump's appeal to white working class people? How might it best be addressed?*

Trump appeals to illegitimate racist and sexist fears, but also appeals to legitimate though misdirected concerns about severely worsening life conditions.

Republicans cater to owners and try to win over workers with lies, posturing, fear of terror, and racism/sexism. Democrats serve owners but cater to what might be called the professional class, and try to modestly accommodate workers to gain their votes.

Not believing campaign speeches, people often vote for who they feel understands their situation better. But if many of Trump's working class supporters are not supporting him because they want him and others like him to get even more rich at working people's expense, if they are not supporting him because he is a real estate tycoon, if they are not supporting him literally because he is abominably racist and sexist, then perhaps they are supporting him because he appears to them unafraid to say what he thinks. He is not polished and academic. He talks straight. He does not appear to be the kind of person who looks down on workers and who day to day constantly exerts direct power over them.

If so, progressives need to speak directly to Trump's supporters, respecting their pain and anger and providing real but also believable policy answers to their concerns.

> 13. *Who are the Greens, and Jill Stein? And does a higher vote tally for them aid social change?*

Greens are progressives and leftists who believe in the desirability of creating a powerful third party in the U.S. as part of the process of winning a new society. They are polling at 3-5 percentage points nationally. They have won some local elections, though their main emphasis has been on presidential elections. Jill Stein is their likely candidate for President.

A higher vote tally for Greens would reveal support and support typically garners more support because momentum matters.

Further, of those who vote Green, some will join the Greens, and then work for them, and that will help their development.

Finally, reaching 15 percent in the polls gets Stein a seat in the coming debates, 5 percent gets federal matching funds, and attaining various state-wide tallies helps ballot access in the future.

14. *What does strategic lesser evil voting mean?*

Strategic lesser evil voting means you vote in light of the implications of your choice for the future. It means you look not only at the short and long-term consequences for human well-being of each candidate winning, but also at the likelihood of each candidate winning.

Strategic lesser evil voting means looking at the likely overall benefit and harms of casting your vote in a particular state for Clinton versus the overall benefit and harm of casting your vote in that state for a third party candidate with no chance of winning. If polling shows a close race between Clinton and Trump, then a small number of additional votes for Clinton could mean the difference between which of the two candidates gets all the state's electoral votes. On the other hand, if polls show that the race is not close, then a strategic lesser evil voter can vote for the Greens or other third party with no negative cost at all.

But what is the positive impact on the Green Party, say, of Green supporters voting for Clinton in contested states? If the Greens were to put all their energies into safe-state campaigning, they could win nearly as many overall votes as otherwise, especially since they wouldn't lose the support of safe-state voters who considered an all-states campaign irresponsible. But even if the Greens lost some votes by declining to campaign for presidential votes in contested states, the impact of these lost presidential votes would be quite modest. Greens who vote for Clinton would emerge from the voting booth with the same views they would have had had their state been safe and had they voted for Stein, and they could work just as hard for Green positions in either case. And Trump would have lost — or, in the horrible event he won, Greens would not be called the cause of it, with disastrous results for the Party.

So even ignoring implications of a Trump victory for the country and the world, Greens would at most be marginally hurt by promoting a safe state strategy, and might even benefit from doing so. And, of course, we should not ignore implications for others, in any event.

15. *But if we're always committed to lesser evil voting, won't that mean we're always going to be voting for a reactionary capitalist party and that therefore the development of an alternative will be impossible?*

If all we do is vote every four years, then no matter how we vote, we will never get much change. What is crucial is whether we build sufficiently effective movements to generate sufficient support for change to carry a really worthy candidate into contention, and then to victory, whether in a mainstream party, like Sanders nearly achieved, or in a third party. And what determines that is overwhelmingly what we are doing other than voting, like the work of Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and other projects that over the past years have paved the way for Sanders, but also on whether our periodic voting creates conditions more or less conducive to progress, and on whether our third party work locally creates a steadily enlarging base.

In this election, progressives and leftists who follow strategic lesser evil voting will be free in nearly all states, we hope, to vote for third parties because those states will be uncontested. In contested

states, their lesser evil vote for Clinton will further the prospects for Greens by contributing to stopping Trump.

In contrast, if progressives in contested states reject voting for Clinton and Trump wins, they would have unintentionally impeded prospects for Green gains and consigned people to four years of Trump.

> 16. *Why blame those who vote for third party candidates in swing states for a Trump victory? Isn't that the argument used to tar Nader voters for Bush's win in 2000? Was it correct then?*

Suppose it comes down to Florida. Suppose we know, as Election Day dawns, that whoever wins Florida becomes President because every other state is clearly in one column or the other. The polls show Florida could go either way. If in this situation a person, or especially a social group, movement, or organization abstains, votes for a third party, or votes for a write-in candidate, those are votes lopped off Clinton's potential total. If some group does that, and it swings the final tally to Trump, then it is impossible to deny that the group's choice had the predictable consequence of giving the election to Trump. Had they chosen differently, Trump would have lost.

In Florida in 2000, Bush beat Gore by 537 votes. Nader got 97,000 votes. Therefore, with all else equal, if only 538 Nader voters had voted instead for Gore, Gore would have won all 25 of Florida's electoral votes and would have won the electoral vote 291 to 246. It is true, of course, that without Republican shenanigans during the Florida vote count, Gore would have won the state. It is also true that had Gore run a better campaign, he would have won the very close election. Also, if they hadn't voted for Nader, some Green voters might not have voted at all and some might even have voted for Bush. But still, despite all this, any 538 Nader voters in Florida could have prevented Bush from becoming president. And had Nader urged them to do just that, while he campaigned elsewhere, and in Florida they worked to prepare to carry on after the election against Gore, then Gore would have won, and the Greens would also have been vastly better off.

> 17. *Don't we need to build an alternative to the two-party duopoly?*

Yes, of course we do, but activism that aims to transform society, rather than simply eliminate a horrible turn toward reaction, will be far more likely to happen with Clinton in office than with Trump.

Ensuring that Trump loses by voting for Clinton in contested states while voting for Stein, or whoever, in safe states, builds for an alternative to the two-party duopoly both by supporting a possible alternative right now in uncontested states, and also by warding off a massive impediment to that alternative for the coming four years, in contested states.

> 18. *But doesn't advocating lesser evil voting mean one doesn't care about the long term and that one is, as some commentators have suggested, a running dog lackey of imperialism?*

We don't feel like we are running dog lackeys of imperialism. We propose and favor full revolutionary alternatives to existing political and economic systems. Yet we also think voting for Clinton in contested states will help block Trump's horrible agenda and also improve the prospects for greater activism to come.

We have the lesser evil inclination in this election not because we are suddenly inexplicably beholden to the powers and institutions we have fought for decades, or because we have lost our nerve, or our way, but because we have for all our adult lives sought and will keep on seeking long

term transformation of our society. We simply see that in our country's current circumstance, lesser evil voting in contested states aids seeking change against wealth and power.

> 19. *Does refusing to vote Clinton even in contested states mean one doesn't care about the well-being of constituencies that will suffer more under Trump than under Clinton?*

In rare cases, perhaps some callousness plays a role, but far more often refusing to vote for Clinton even in contested states means that one is furious at the Democrats for playing dirty with Bernie, that one hates what Clinton stands for, that one hates what Clinton and her administration will be inclined to do in office, that one feels a tremendous urgency to transcend not just neoliberal policies, but the whole political, economic, and social system we currently endure, and that one just doesn't want to and would indeed feel sick to the core to pull a lever that seemingly ratifies all that one despises.

The problem is, even with all these fully warranted and admirable feelings causing one's refusal, the refusal itself could elect Trump and unleash even worse outcomes than those we oppose on many, many people, and arguably on the whole species.

Does anyone believe a progressive, leftist, or revolutionary who pulls the lever for Clinton in a contested state must in any way suffer diminished ability to fight on? Why can't we hold our nose, cast our vote, and then go right back to struggling for a new society? Why can't we stop Trump and also build new political, organizational, and movement alternatives?

> 20. *But isn't voting for Clinton a slippery slope. First you resolve to vote for her, then you don't want to criticize her before the election (for fear you'll help the greater evil), then you tone down your criticism of her after the election (because you'll be helping some greater evil defeat her four years later)…*

We all like to feel good about ourselves and we all at times rationalize our choices. But even so, this trajectory is not inevitable. We can vote for Clinton while indicating we do not support her and that we will oppose her, and we can then do just that.

Indeed, if the overwhelming message of leftists in talks and writing in the coming weeks is that we should vote strategically and also fight on, it is hard to see why pulling the lever for Clinton in a contested state, of which there will hopefully be few or even none, should interfere with that voter becoming one of Clinton's most steadfast and effective opponents, or with that voter becoming one of the Green Party's most steadfast and effective supporters and participants.

> 21. Aren't you asking Greens to be inactive until November 8, thereby cutting their momentum?

No, not at all. Campaign in most states for president, for local offices, and for issues, and in swing states campaign for local offices and for issues. The idea that foregoing voting for Stein in contested states means doing nothing there downplays the importance of local activities and campaigns.

> 22. But I want to vote my conscience.

So do we. Why isn't accounting for the impact of our choice on the well-being of others and on future organizing prospects part of voting our consciences?

> 23. But isn't it harmful to vote based on fear rather than positive program?

It would be great if we had nothing to fear and the only question before us was which of various

progressive programs we wanted to adopt. But how can we not be fearful of climate catastrophe or nuclear war or mass deportations or racist violence?

Regrettably, we need to focus on both offense and defense: advancing positive programs while, by our 10-minute vote in swing states, we block our most feared outcomes.

24. But Trump's not going to win…

Pundits on the left and elsewhere have consistently underestimated Trump in this campaign. Today Clinton is ahead in the polls, but it is reckless to assume that her victory is a foregone conclusion.

In any event, the odds of Trump winning has no bearing on the call to vote for Clinton only where it might matter. If, in early November, it is clear that Trump has no chance of winning, then one can vote for a third party everywhere. If it is clear that some state that was previously considered up for grabs was now decisively in one column or another, voters there could likewise vote for a third party.

25. *What is most important, post election? Is it left unity? Is it who is president? Is it what new organizations and activism we have put in place to go forward?*

All three are important.

Efforts at change in the United States cannot succeed, long or short term, unless all who favor these ends work together in a spirit of mutual aid. So we need left unity and we have to be trying for it, not assaulting one another, even as we seek other gains as well.

Aside from affecting many people's lives today, who is president empowers various views, establishes context, and also affects government responses to dissent. Do activists have to fight against policies that seek to move us back in time, or can activists focus on positive aspirations linked to long term aims? Does dissent try to reduce magnified repression or eliminate familiar repression?

Change depends on the levels of activism and organization we have in place to fight for it, and that in turn depends on the extent to which we develop organization and activism as opposed to only immersing ourselves in seeking vote tallies. So, while trying to generate unity, and while expanding popular support, and while trying to avoid a Trump presidency, we need to also build new organizations that can sustain activism in the years ahead.

26. *But didn't Bernie Sanders behave like a "sheep-dog," trying to herd all left voters into the Democratic Party corral?*

If Sanders was a sheepdog, then all his supporters are sheep. What a strange way to characterize those one hopes will be engines of social change. But luckily we don't feel herded, do you?

Sanders wants Clinton to beat Trump. So do we. Sanders wants various changes in the Democratic Party's rules and methods. We would like to have those changes too. Sanders says he wants much more, and we do too.

But Sanders has gone another step. He is creating an organization. It is not called Young Democrats or Super Democrats or Democratic Allies. It is called "Our Revolution." What will the structure, policies, and program of the organization be? We don't know, but hopefully it will mature into a participatory force fighting for Bernie's program, and for much beyond that as well.

Sanders has said from the day he began his campaign that what matters to winning change is on-going dissent, demonstrations, and organizing in the street through and beyond Election Day. And now he is adding that organization matters, too.

The purported blemish many now point to regarding Sanders, is that he has said we have to stop Trump which means we have to elect Clinton. But that is consistent with the rest of his message and enhances it as soon as we realize that for us it can mean voting for Clinton where necessary to beat Trump, but opposing her objectionable policies everywhere until we have replaced her administration with much better, and then opposing that administration too, until we have a new system.

In fact, Sanders brought many new people into politics and was able to reach millions of people that third parties have for decades been unable to reach. There is no reason to suppose that those of his supporters who are now going to vote for Clinton have been duped into doing so. They may have been attracted to Sanders in the first place because he offered a plausible path to substantial social change without risking a reactionary outcome. They may well agree with strategic lesser evil voting.

Would it have been better, not least in combatting Trump, if Sanders had come to the convention and said something like, "Hillary Clinton's agenda is not all that I wanted and I don't believe a Clinton Administration will bring us liberty and justice, but I am absolutely convinced, without an inkling of doubt, that having Hillary Clinton in the Oval Office will do far less harm to working people, minorities, women, the environment, and international relations, and will provide a far better context for winning further gains than having Donald Trump there. For that reason, I want Hillary Clinton to become the next President and I intend to campaign as hard as I can in every contested state to urge my supporters to vote Clinton in those states, and then to join me and our new organization, Our Revolution, to agitate, militate, and organize against the new Clinton administration and on behalf of working people, women, black people, brown people, LGBT people, and really all but the oligarchs and potentates who run our society and profit from our labors."?

Perhaps that would have been better (we think so), but it did not happen.

> 27. *What then can we sensibly say about Sanders' role in all that has unfolded? Why didn't he run for President as a Green, with Stein as his Vice President?*

Sanders' role has been consistent and, relative to anything that anyone might plausibly have anticipated, far more successful than other efforts we might name. Sanders ran as a Democrat for the outreach and visibility it would facilitate, which it certainly did.

We can only guess at Sanders' decision not to accept the Green invitation to run on their ticket once he could no longer get the Democratic Party nomination. But we hope that if Sanders had thought that he and the Greens might have won, then he would have run. But if he thought, as we guess was the case, that it might have only meant his getting 10 percent or perhaps 15 percent and Trump winning, then we assume he concluded that the risk of running wasn't worth it. The downside was too great, the upside too limited. The better path, we assume he decided, was to get Trump removed from the field by a Clinton victory, and then proceed with the struggle.

> 28. *What might a person seeking a real revolution in U.S. institutions do at a time like this? What ought such a person not do?*

There are countless possible answers as to what one might usefully do in these times. Try to preserve and enlarge the momentum that has developed largely from the Sanders campaign, while also trying to ensure that Trump loses. Work toward creating new organization. Work toward

developing and creating revolutionary vision and consistent program feeding into that vision. Support diverse movements and seek to mutually align them into larger endeavors.

As to what not to do, of course that too has many answers, but the most germane might be — don’t escalate time-bound differences into hostile disputes and then into dismissals of allies and potential allies.