

# USA: Green Party Challenges Two-Party Fraud

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The recent strike and mass mobilizations of teachers and their supporters in Chicago occurring in the present electoral campaigns were significant by who were opposed to them.

The Democrat Obama and the Republican Romney arraigned themselves against this fight to defend public schools.

In contrast, Green Party Presidential candidate Jill Stein solidarized with the movement and was invited to speak at one of the rallies.

Obama officially kept silent on the strike, but didn't need to speak to show where he stood. His former chief of staff in the White House and now Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, led the charge against the teachers.

Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is in charge of Obama's program to weaken the teachers' unions and promote the privatization of public schools known as the "Race to the Top."

Duncan was the Chicago schools CEO from 2002 through 2008, before he was elevated by Obama.

In a show of bipartisan support, Romney and his even more reactionary running mate, Paul Ryan, came out in solidarity with Emanuel and denounced the teachers.

Jill Stein was nominated by the Green Party convention in July. A physician, she is well-known as an advocate for a national health insurance program for all, and fighter on environmental issues. She successfully opposed construction of trash incinerators and campaigned to clean up the "Filthy Five" coal plants in Massachusetts, her home state.

Stein previously ran against Mitt Romney for Massachusetts Governor in 2002, and for Secretary of State in 2006, winning 350,000 votes as a Green-Rainbow candidate against the Democrats and Republicans.

Stein's running mate, Cheri Honkala, was born into extreme poverty. A single mother in her teens, she became a leading advocate for the poor and homeless, co-founding the Kensington Welfare Rights Union in Philadelphia. Honkala became a socialist, and for a time was a member of one of the Maoist organizations.

Honkala was named Philadelphia Weekly "Woman of the Year" in 1997, and the same title by Ms. Magazine in 2001. In 2011 she ran as the Green candidate for Sheriff of Philadelphia pledging to stop home foreclosures in the wake of the ongoing depression.

The July Green party convention was a movement event. Numerous references to the Occupy movement were met by cheers. With the slogan of "Occupy the Elections," the party declared its solidarity with the goals of Occupy in opposing the "One Percent."

In her acceptance speech, Stein said she joined the Green Party because it's "the only national party that is not bought and paid for by corporate money...."

"The corporate-sponsored political parties - the establishment - isn't going to change the status quo for us. We've got to do it."

Chants of "Bring the Troops Home Now!" erupted when Stein denounced the illegal wars being waged by Washington and called for closing the nearly 1,000 U.S. military bases around the world.

She condemned the National Defense Authorization Act backing the U.S. wars, the use of drones, the Patriot Act, the racist Arizona anti-immigrant laws, and called for the repeal of NAFTA which impoverishes Mexican peasants and workers.

Gar Alperovitz, historian and writer, author of *America Beyond Capitalism*, gave the keynote speech at the convention. A reformist socialist, his references to socialism were met with cheers from the delegates. He told the convention that their challenge was the "transformation of the most powerful corporate capitalistic system in the history of the world - that's what it is about ... not simply a gesture, not simply a new party, not simply a green movement."

He concluded by referring to two recent polls that 49 percent of youth had a favorable opinion of socialism, and concluded that there were opportunities to change the system.

The Green parties in much of the world have become part of the capitalist system, even joining capitalist and imperialist governments. The Green Party in the U.S. has not gone down that path.

From its original formation around ecological issues, the Green party in the U.S. has broadened into a social justice party. Within the party there is a wide political variation from left-liberal to socialist, but the party's direction under the impact of the depression is to become more radical.

The party is largely white. Women, African Americans and Latinos within the party have organized themselves into caucuses, and have run for local and state offices.

The Stein-Hankala ticket also brings some much-needed organizational experience to the poorly-organized Greens. In the face of undemocratic election laws designed to preserve the two-party capitalist shell game, the ticket will be on the ballot in over 30 states with 85 percent of the population, not a small organizational achievement.

They have also qualified for federal matching funds by raising at least \$5,000 in a minimum of 20 states, with only \$250 from any one contributor counting. This was a first for the Greens, and was accomplished by a grass-roots campaign.

The pressure to vote for Obama in spite of his record in office is great because of the sharp moves to the right by the Republicans frightens many.

Against those with a "lesser evil" argument who attack the Greens as "spoilers" who take votes from the Democrats, Stein replies, "you can't spoil something that is already rotten." Speaking on Democracy Now! Stein said that keeping silent and voting for the "lesser evil" has brought us to the present stage of economic depression, to perpetual wars, to high unemployment and loss of civil liberties.

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