

US: Interview with Howie Hawkins on the Green Party, his future plans and more

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Oaklandsocialist interviews Green Party candidate of president in 2020 and long time activist, Howie Hawkins. Full transcript below video.

John Reiman: So we're talking here with Howie Hawkins, who's a prominent member of the Green Party and a former member of the Teamsters. So would you like to talk a little bit first about your background? You were a Teamster, for many years.

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I spent my last 20 years working as a member of the Teamsters Union at UPS, unloading trucks. Before that I worked in construction. I was active in the union to the extent I could be. My local was a pretty conservative local. Every time I tried to raise something, I was called out of order in the union meetings and told to go to the political action committee. But then nobody would tell me when the meetings were. A couple of times, I wandered into the union hall, and they were meeting. They were really upset. But so there was that. And then I was a member of Teamsters, for Democratic Union and participated in their, you know, reform campaigns to try to democratize the union.

John Reiman: So how about just around the issues of contracts? What was in the contracts, how contracts were enforced or not enforced? That sort of thing?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, that was a constant issue. We would get contracts in the period I was in there. We were basically coasting on the good contract the Teamsters got with UPS from the 1997 strike. And every contract that the Hoffa administration agreed to was concessionary. So we fought against those contracts. We supported alternatives to Hoffa, when we had elections of national officers, the opposite, I was committed to independent progressive politics, from being a teenager. And so I was involved in the Peace and Freedom Party, and then the People's Party [which was] then the Citizens Party. And then the first National Green Party organizing meeting in 1984, I was there. And that's the party that survived and stuck around and persisted. And I've been involved ever since.

John Reimann: As you have explained, there's a division in the Green Party right now, over the issue of support for Ukraine. And I wonder if you could talk about that division and your views of it?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I think what's happening in the Green Party is reflective of what's happening with the ideological left in the United States and around the world.

And I think what we're dealing with is a legacy of the old campist left, you know, derived from the Communist Party, the Stalinists, and their position during the Cold War of supporting the so called socialist camp, which were hardly socialist countries, they weren't democratic at all. And then in this country, we have the legacy of, you know, the Marcyite groups. You know, Sam Marcy was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, the Trotskyist group. And in the 50s, he wanted to support

the Russian invasion of Hungary, to suppress the workers pro democracy movement. And so we ended up forming the workers world party, which is still with us, very tiny group, but it and its derivative, the Party for Socialism, liberation, have disproportionate influence in anti war activities. And so I think within the Green Party, that campist position has influenced a lot of people.

But it's a it's a split, really 50-50 down the middle, the National Committee has had a couple of votes and the campist position won by just a few votes in each case, you know, like the last one was 54 to 50, with 11 Abstentions.

So, you know, the opposite position that I advocate, and a lot of Greens support is an internationalist position. We should be in solidarity with people fighting exploitation and oppression around the world, including the Ukrainians fighting and invasion from Russia. And that's in the best traditions of green politics, and socialist politics. So that's the debate in the Green Party right now.

John Reimann: How do you see the whole so called Peace Movement? And what is your view of calling for peace and being anti war in the abstract? In the example with the in the case of the war in Ukraine?

Howie Hawkins: Well, what these peace groups and pacifist are advocating is for the US to stop sending arms to Ukraine. You know, and that's easy for them to save from their privilege purchase in the US, where they don't have Russian bombs raining down on them. We don't have invading soldiers coming to detain torture and rape them. If they don't cooperate with the Russian occupation.

It's not even anti war. Because if Ukrainians disarm because the West stops and giving them arms, it's not going to end the war. Russia is going to continue its invasion to recolonize Ukraine. So yeah, Orwell is right, in certain situations to be pacifist is objectively to be pro fascist. And that's what the Putin regime is. And, you know, is disappointing that a lot of the peace groups don't see that, You know, they just sort of have a knee jerk position that sending arms to anybody, anytime, anywhere, is wrong.

They don't distinguish between aggressors, and people fighting back in their self defense. And, you know, that's a fundamental distinction that, that you you've got to realize, or otherwise, you're not really dealing with the violence in the war.

John Reimann: It seems to me that the majority of the left has been unable and unwilling to undergo what seems to be a change in their mindset. What do you think about that?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah. I was from the start saying the Ukrainians need arms to defend themselves, because I've been following this since 2014. And realized that Russia wants to recolonize Ukraine, and I've been listening to the progressive forces in Ukraine. You know, it's understandable, given the vicious nature of US imperialism, particularly in the Middle East and Latin America in recent decades that your default position would be what the US is doing it, we should oppose it, but you've got to start with the people on the ground. And, you know, particularly the progressive forces and what they're saying. And so that's who I was listening to in Ukraine.

And if you look back in history, you know, the US been an imperialist power, since its beginning, you know, manifest destiny, the Monroe Doctrine, etc. But there are times when the US intervened, and it was the right thing to do. You know, in World War II, the what FDR called the arsenal for democracy armed the Soviet Union, against the Nazis. You know, would we oppose that today?

The left in the 30s was saying, the US should arm the Anti Fascist forces against Franco who was

backed by Hitler and Mussolini. Now, the US didn't do that. But the left was saying we should have.

You know, was Eisenhower wrong? And he actually did this in coalition with the Soviet Union, to stop the UK, France and Israel, from taking over the Suez Canal from Egypt after Egypt nationalized it. We stopped that invasion. And you can find more examples, even though the US is an imperialist power, Sometimes, imperialists do the right thing, maybe for the wrong reasons. And you shouldn't just base your decision on what the opposite of the US is doing. You got to look at the situation where it's happening, in this case, Ukraine.

Yeah, it's disappointing that so many people on the left, ignore what the people on the ground are saying. And it's not just in Ukraine. I's in Syria, right. Even now, in Iran, you know, some people on this ideological left are saying that it's the U.S. that is behind this uprising by this women led movement for democracy and freedom.

So you got to start with the people on the ground. Right. And one of the ironies here is that they call these pro democracy uprisings, or color revolutions, that they say are inspired by the CIA. As if the people on the ground who are fighting for their rights don't exist. And, you know, when is the left against revolutions that are progressive? It's a big problem. And it's, as I said, I think at the top, you know, this is a debate that's going around the left internationally.

John Reimann: You know, under Stalin, the communists around the world viewed every struggle in every other country in the world just as a matter of geopolitics. How could this, that or the other issue be resolved in the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. And the peoples involved in those struggles were just pawns on the chessboard. That's why they call it the grand chess game or the grand chessboard. And I think that given that Stalinism, was the major force within the socialist movement ever since like the 1930s, or '40s, that even the Trotskyist then started to adapt to that view, They started to take it on, or most of them did. And that is what explains their viewing things in the way that you described. What do you think of that?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I think what we're dealing with is a legacy of Stalinism. And in that period, the Marcyites do this too, who do come out of the Trotskyist movement, you know, over 50 years ago — they they look to nation states, as the agents of change rather than the working classes, which is not Marxism, or other currents of socialism, which, you know, are oriented to the working class as the agent of change. So in some ways, they they really left the socialist left. And I always liked Rosa Luxemburg phrase, which I can't remember exactly, but she said "without democracy, there is no socialism. Without socialism, there's no democracy." And that's what's been lost. So that, you know, if the state owns the means of production, we have to defend it, but they're very selective. You know, Saudi Arabia owns Aramco. But we don't call that a deformed worker state or whatever you want to call it. So, you know, the democracy piece of this has got to be central to our vision of socialism.

John Reimann: So you see this weird amalgam. What some people call the red brown alliance, or an alliance between red, communist and brown, Hitler's Brownshirts. And in my view, that is been a long time in the making. You had, for instance, that Anti Globalization Movement of Russia conference in 2014. And even before that you saw that developing. I believe you see it much more clearly now. But anyway, how do you see the development of that so called red brown alliance? Do you see that as something fairly recent, or something that's been developing for a period of time?

Howie Hawkins: Well, it's been around a long time. I mean, it's a classic fascist tactic to adopt leftists verbiage and slogans to try to attack a broader tract, a broader base for the reactionary program. I mean, that's why Hitler called his party the National Socialist Workers Party.

So, you know, we got that right now with this rage against the war machine demonstration coming up, which is definitely, you know, red brown politics, although it's not so much red, you know, the old campist left, you know, the United anti war coalition. Answer, Black Lives for Peace. They're not participating. In fact, they're critical of it, because there are these right wing forces in that demonstration.

Although it's ironic that people like in the United National Anti-war Coalition and Workers World Party and the Black Alliance for Peace, participated in that anti globalization movement conference in Russia, back in 2014, which was clearly a red brown affair. There were fascists from Russia, even the US from around the world participating the common denominator was they all oppose us led Western dominance of the world order. But you're basically promoting right wing politics, giving them a platform if you participate in this kind of nonsense.

Now this Rage Against the War Machine, it's not the ideological old left that's participating it's podcasters and a paper party called the People's Party, which is more online than on the ground. And I think they're just being opportunistic. They're looking for a broader base and, you know, these podcasters that they've got on air, you know, like Jimmy Dore.

They denigrate any racist, feminist, gay liberation as divisive to working class unity, when the opposite is true. We won't have working class unity if we're divided by race and gender and sexual orientation. So unfortunately, you know, the Green Party by a narrow 54 to 50 vote of the National Committee voted to endorse this. And I think that reflects opportunism as well, you know, the Greens don't want to be left behind it, what they, I think mistakenly think it will be a big demonstration.

And, you know, this demonstration is not really anti war. I mean, that's the most fundamental thing. It's only against US military aid to Ukraine. It's not against Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, none of their demands address that. And some of the speakers like Scott Ritter, are actually for Russia, you know, taking over Ukraine. So it's something peace activists and people on the left should stay away from.

John Reimann: So I see that Code Pink, which I don't think they're explicitly socialist, but I think they would be considered to be on the left that their leadership is against endorsing it. But that their most prominent spokesperson, Medea Benjamin, had originally been featured as the main speaker and wanted to speak at it had it not been for the position of Code Pink. And as we know, Code Pink, and Medea Benjamin, in particular, in practice, supports the Iranian dictatorship. So it seems to me that I believe Code Pick is the most prominent so called peace and justice group in the United States. And it seems to me that they are very prominent part of the red brown Alliance.

Howie Hawkins: Well, my take on that is, you know, the younger staff apparently, you know, got Code Pink to pull out, which is a good sign. The question I have, and I don't know the answer to it is, is that staff only opposed to this demonstration because of the right wing forces involved? And do they still hold to the position that Code Pink has, as articulated by Medea Benjamin, that the US should use its leverage military and economic over Ukraine, to force it into a land for peace deal with Russia, which is not anti imperialist. It's having Western imperialists, the US and NATO get together with the Russian imperialists to carve up Ukraine. So I think, Code Pink and the rest of the peace groups that have taken that position, really need to rethink their position.

You know, if we allow a war of aggression by Russia, to succeed in grabbing at least some of Ukraine, that gives a green light to other aggressors, other imperialist powers, including the US, which is, you know, invaded countries like Iraq, which was as egregious as what Russia is doing in

Ukraine.

John Reimann: So it seems to me that Code Pink, through Medea Benjamin well not only through her, but also through the co founder, Jody Evans, who was married to Neville Singam, who is a direct, who is a major investor in China, and really is a representative of Chinese imperialism. And that they are deeply committed to supporting amongst others the Iranian dictatorship?

And so I don't see how Code Pink can as a whole, can really seriously pull back from from that position without a major crisis in Code Pink, I mean, Neville Singam is, I believe, a major funder of Code Pink, and he's not going to pull back from that position. So how can they and their staff, young and maybe they're even idealistic, but they didn't come on staff with their eyes closed, they must have known that general roll of Code Pink. So how can they?

Well, let me put it this way: None of these groups had any problem with this red brown Alliance so long it was, it was it was 5000 miles away in Moscow. I'm talking about the 2014 conference. But when it comes right home, and a spotlight is shined a little more clearly on it, then they have a problem because they're exposed. So I don't see any of them pulling back from their from their general politics, which is in effect, covert, if not over support for Putin.

Howie Hawkins: I think there's a lot of confusion, in Code Pink, and in their supporters in the peace movement generally. You know, Code Pink, they and Medea Benjamin would deny she supports the theocratic regime in Iran. But she did go and basically give it political support by appearing or participating in a trip there that met with the leadership there. So that I think it is confusing and, you know, Neville Singham, I don't think he funds Code Pink. The Benjamin Foundation, which is Medea Benjamin's Family Foundation, I think provides most of the funding. But Singham does play in this milieu. He's a big funder of the People's Forum in New York City, which seems to be close to the Party for Socialism and Liberation. And, yeah, he is a pro Chinese campist. And he's using all the money he's made in the tech industry, including working with Chinese companies, using that money he made to fund things like the People's Forum. And I think the relationship with Jody Evans probably influences Code Pink to work with groups like the Party for Socialism and Liberation and its campist position. So I think it's more confusion than, you know, conscious alliance with the, you know, a red brown alliance. You know, they always have disclaimers, they don't really support Iran, they just support a war against Iran by the US and Israel, which I think we would support to that position. You know, don't [unclear]

John Reimann: Well, they can have disclaimers, all they like, you know. It's like the ones who say, "Well, no, we don't support Putin, but we just support the policies that will enable Putin to roll over Ukraine." So, I mean, I've never seen a serious criticism of the Iranian dictatorship [on their part]. I've never seen them overtly support the revolution there. I've never seen.... They were over there at the time that that human rights lawyer, I forget her first name Sotoudeh was in prison. They never brought that up. At least they never mentioned having brought that up while they were there on that particular visit, and shortly afterwards, Sotoudeh was sentenced to, I think, it was 100 lashes and 10 years in prison, something like that. So it's not a matter of what they say; it's a matter of what they do. It seems to me that their actions have served to support the Iranian dictatorship, and they're not 18 year old children who don't know any better. So I mean, I guess my question is, do you agree that in fact, in practice, they do support the Iranian dictatorship?

Howie Hawkins: I think going on that junket to meet with the Ukrainian top officials did give support to the Ukrainian even the Iranians, you mean Iranian regime?

John Reimann: Yeah, that's that's what I'm saying.

Howie Hawkins: I think there's confusion there. I think we got to be talking to the base that is influenced by Code Pink and explaining that, you know, an internationalist position supports the pro democracy movement in Iran, and doesn't give cover to the regime. And the same is true in Ukraine

John Reimann: Yes, but in my experience, talking to the people that support these groups, what in all, but a few cases tends to be fairly futile.

Howie Hawkins: Well, it's I think we just must be patient and keep explaining. I do see people changing their mind on the Ukraine issue. When they learn more about it in here, and internationalist perspective. It's not like there's been a sudden switch. But that can happen. I remember during anti Vietnam War movement I did neighborhood schools I went to, a large number of the parents were fathers who were working at that Fremont, auto factory. And they were World War II veterans, and they were all very pro Vietnam War until a little bit after Tet offensive, and then like a school of fish or a flock of birds suddenly changing direction, suddenly, they were all against it. And I think, you know, the anti war movement was impacting them, it's just, they wouldn't admit it until their friends admitted it. And suddenly, they all change their mind. So that's what I'm hopeful of, if we can just keep out there putting our position out, explaining what's going on, we're going to win people over?

John Reimann: Well, there's been a long term breach that I believe has widened quite a bit over several decades, a breach between the kind of what you could call the left activists, and the big mass of working class people. And what you're describing about the Vietnam War, is a shift in the view of the big mass of working class people. I think that the overwhelming majority of workers today support our view on Ukraine. But I'm talking about the left activists, including those around the different so called socialist groups, and those around groups like, Code Pink. And, I mean, I agree that some of them might change their minds, but those that are really committed to these groups and and their approach, my experience has been it's somewhat fairly futile.

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I think you're right, I think Stanley Aronowitz used to distinguish between the popular left of progressive and peace minded people, and the ideological left, which is organized into these groups. And I think you're right, the mass of progressive minded people, you know, are sympathetic with the Ukrainians and think they should be supported. The Russian invasion is wrong. It's in the ideological left, where people have, as we were talking about earlier, they're looking at the geopolitical situation and not, you know, the fight of the working class and oppressed people in Ukraine, for their freedom. And, yeah, the ideological, or ideologically committed, people are harder to persuade, no doubt. And I think, you know, our, our task is to make sure that the popular left of progressive minded people maintains its support for Ukraine.

But I think we also need to take on the ideological left, because one of the reasons it's hard to build a socialist left is that from Stalinism and this Marciite campism, they defend the most odious regimes, and give them political support. And then people think, "Well, if that's the left, I don't want anything to do with it." And that's why we need to have another voice out there. So the Ukrainian Socialist Solidarity campaign and the Ukraine Solidarity Network, I think can play an important role there in challenging the ideological left, you know, to what their principles and positions really aren't.

John Reimann: That's why I was in favor of naming our group explicitly socialist.... Because I don't think that together, us and other Ukraine Support Network is really going to be able to have much of an impact on the policies, let's say, of Joe Biden, or obviously not on

Putin. But what we can do, I hope, is to start to play a role in the development of a new socialist movement.

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I agree with that. That's why I'm a member of the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign. And although I would disagree a little bit I think that, you know, the broader progressive movement or people in this country — we need to keep messaging them. Because as we go through this year, there's going to be at least Trump and probably others on the Republican side, we're going to campaign as quote unquote, "peace candidates", and saying, you know, we should cut off aid to Ukraine. And most of them are saying redeploy to the Pacific against China and to the southern border against immigrants. And maybe the tax breaks. And so that's going to be a debate there. It'll be a debate in the House of Representatives, when the next round of funding for Ukraine comes up probably later this year. And the polling shows while on the progressive side, you know, Democrats and Democratic leaning independents are still supporting aid to Ukraine, it's eroded very little. On the Republican and Republican leaning independent side, it's eroded enormously. Right. So that, you know, that's going to be a political issue. So it's not just a debate within the ideological left, it's, we got to maintain support in the popular left for support for Ukraine. And, you know, the, like, you know, we both know about this proposed resolution at the DSA chapter in Seattle, which calls for cutting off arms to Ukraine, and then going after the DSA supported members of Congress to get them to do the same position. So this is a debate that I think we can have some influence on, and we should at least try.

John Reimann: I agree, I didn't mean to imply that we should just devote ourselves to that, that we should just ignore what happens in the wider society, and in the wider working class. You see, for instance, Medea Benjamin, is now tweeting, in effect support for Trump and Marjorie Taylor Greene. And she can deny all she likes, that she's supporting the two of them. But when you send out messages supporting what they're saying on something, that is building support for them, which means it's going to inevitably mean building support for their politics. So what is your take on it? I mean, is it not possible that people like Medea, Benjamin and others, that they could provide a certain left cover, left respectability, for the far right, people like Greene and the Republicans to start opposing sending arms to Ukraine?

Howie Hawkins: Well, yeah, by making those tweets, she is providing left cover. And I think, you know, this gets back to the whole question of Russian support for Trump in the far right in the US through influence operations. And I think a lot of people on the left underestimate that danger, and the danger from the far right in this country. So you'll get people in that milieu saying, in some cases, Trump, you know, even I think Jill Stein said it once in 2016, that Trump was the lesser evil to Clinton, because he wasn't such a warmonger. Right? And, you know, the, the tolerance of the racism, just in that kind of statement. You know, Trump should be beyond the pale for what it means in this country, for our domestic politics.

And of course, the truth is, Trump wasn't a war monger or a peacemaker. He's an opportunist. He had no foreign policy. You know, he was basically buffeted by the last person he talked to. So I think that is a position we should challenge. And, you know, it's unfortunate that there are some people on ideological left that are putting out crazy ideas like that – that the the far right here is not the real danger. You know, some some of them say it's the, it's the neoliberal Democrats, imperialists were the greater danger. And I think if you can't tell the difference between a party that wants to outlaw abortion and a party that wants to defend it, and saying there's no difference, or even that the Republicans might be the lesser evil on foreign policy, you're really not looking at, you know, the real forces at play here.

(Oaklandsocialist comments: *We didn't really have time to get into the issue of Trump and Russia*

in this interview. However, anybody who has followed this blog will know that we think there is ample evidence that Trump was a money launderer for the Russian mafia capitalist class for many years and that that makes him beholden to Putin.)

John Reimann: Well, that brings us to actually the upcoming presidential election in 2024. So what's your view of the upcoming elections and running like a left candidate like a Green Party candidate or or Something like that?

Howie Hawkins: Well, I agree we want to oppose the Republican neofascist trend, and defeat them, and a left party is running against them. So I'm for running an independent left presidential candidate. I was that candidate in 2020. And I think there are three reasons why the Green Party should do it. First is just practical. The vote that the presidential candidate for the Green Party gets has an impact on their ballot status and 40 of the states. And having a ballot line makes it a lot easier to run local and state candidates, which is how the Green Party or another independent left party can really build its political base. So there's a set practical consideration. And then, a second thing is, I think campaigns by the Green Party can influence the political debate and advance our program of eco socialists and anti militarist policies. You know, the Green New Deal was the signature issue of the Green Party in the 2010s. I first ran on it - (the) first candidate and us to run on a green New Deal running for governor in New York in 2010. And it became the signature issue of the Green Party. Jill Stein ran on that theme and 2012 and 2016, for President in many down ballot candidates ran on it. And by 2019, the Democrats at least picked up the slogan and got the question into the national debate. Now, the actual policies that they put forward were were greatly watered down from what the Green Party was talking about. But at least we advanced the debate. And then the third thing is you're on a campaign, you attract new people, particularly younger people. So it's a good organizing vehicle.

John Reimann: That leads to another question. And that is, you mentioned, having been active in the Peace and Freedom Party now the Green Party, and the need for I believe you talked about the need for a new left party in the United States. But isn't the question really a class question of two capitalist parties, and the absence of a working class party?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, and, you know, the Green Party aspires to be that working class party. I mean, green is a metaphor for the environment. And, you know, Green Parties in Europe filled that lane, in their politics, while there were basically social democratic parties and communist parties that, you know, tried to build their base in the working class and advance their issues. And a left party here needs to do both. And, you know, frankly, the Green Party's the rank and file and its leadership are more working class than most of the ideologically socialist groups, which are based on the campuses in the colleges and degreed or credentialed professions. But on the other hand, the Green Party is not organized to do the kind of organizing that we need to do to build that base on the ground, which I believe has to come from having local parties that are consistently active in street politics and electoral politics, and talks to the people in their communities.

I mean, it's not enough to put your event out on social media, because you're gonna get the usual suspects, you got to go out and knock on doors, and do what they call deep canvassing where you're not there preaching so much as listening, finding out what people's concerns are showing concern for them and building a relationship and trust over time. So that then you have a basis for talking about policy, because, you know, I've found doing that in local elections. A lot of people don't agree with many of the policies I propose. But they know me as somebody who's in the community consistently and takes the trouble to come by and talk to them. And they just respect that politics is a lot about guts. It's about whether people trust you and think, you know, you're going to look out for their best interests. And once you have that trust, then you have the basis for, you know, even challenging people on their policies in a way that's constructive and, you know, brings the

conversation forward. So that's what I think is going to take to build a base in the working class working class people tend to be alienated.

But I don't think apathetic. I mean, I just know this from you know, Teamsters, I worked with a lot of them, don't vote. But I'll tell you when... you know, I urge them to vote, but they know I'm a political activist. When issues would be in the news, you know, they would become under me when I got to work and asked me what I think about those issues in the news. So I think, you know, they're concerned, they're just alienated from a political system, where they only see, you know, establishment people that don't care about them can't even see them. And then we got the problem that most election districts in this country are one party districts. They're not competitive elections, because of gerrymandering, and the winner take all single member district system, so that we know who's going to win before the election even happens, because either the Republicans or the Democrats are the majority in that district. So the elections that a lot of ways are a farce.

And I think these people understand that or at least instinctively feel it. So I think we've got to be if we're going to have a left party, it's got to be there at the grassroots, you know, talking with people, and building those relationships and trust, and some of those people will come to participate.

John Reimann: Well, you know, I think words do matter. And I would say it is better to talk about a working class party, rather than the left party. And in that light, it seems to me that a working class party will arise, in part organically from a new uprising of the working class as a whole, or at least a major section of the working class, which we don't see at this time. And it seems to me that the different parties or groups that are struggling to be a party, including the Green Party, that they don't base their perspectives on that development itself. And connected with that, what are the perspectives for a new upsurge of at least significant sector of the working class?

Howie Hawkins: I mean, I don't have much perspective, I think what we got to do is just keep organizing and educating and, you know, being ready, when those movements come up. So that was the second part of your question. The first part was, oh, the working class orientation. Yeah, I agree with you. I think when you're speaking to the popular left and the working class, you should use language like, you know, we represent and want to speak for an organized working class, rather than we want to organize a left, because people don't vote for isms they vote for, you know, parties that they think are looking out for them. So I agree with you that the rhetoric should be more, you know, we're a working class party than a Left Party.

John Reimann: But if we talk about ourselves as the Left Party, then that's how we think of things. And that influences a lot of what we do. So that's what I'm saying, isn't it better to talk about a working class party than to talk about the Left Party?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I basically agree with that. It's somewhat hard to separate them because, you know, there are left theories, you know, Marxism being the most dominant that says, you know, the working class is the agent of liberation. So they get intertwined. But I agree with your basic point that, you know, we should be talking to people about building a working class party that people can identify with and participate in.

John Reimann: Right. And we shouldn't be talking amongst ourselves about that. Also, in my view, you talked about running as a Green Party candidate for president, yourself running, I assume that's what you're thinking. But to what extent does that vote of the leadership, you know, to support the Rage Against the War Machine — to what extent does that vote represent the views of the Green Party as a whole? And what does that mean? For people like yourself, as far as your future in the Green Party?

Howie Hawkins: Well, it's split right down the middle. And if anything that motivates me to run again, to put a internationalist perspective, and try to win that perspective in the Green Party, as a whole. We got to be in solidarity with working in oppressed people around the world. And you know, that is really the Green Party tradition. You know, The German greens got started as a party that took neither side of the Cold War and fuck the missiles in the Euro missiles crisis on both sides. And, you know, people like Petra Kelly was prominent and she would go over to East Germany. And at one point she was asking Honaker, the East German leader to sign a and disarmament pledge and he didn't do it.

But you know, they were challenging on both sides and one of their leaders. In the early greens, there was Rudy Barro, who had been imprisoned as a critic of quote unquote, really existing socialism in East Germany. And when he got out of prison, and he went and exiled West Germany join the Green Party. So that's the, that's the best Green Party tradition. And I'll try, if I run, I would try to, you know, win the green. So that position, I think that'll be the hottest issue, debated because we're not really debating any other policy issues. But whether I run or not, I haven't decided, I mean, it's a huge undertaking, to assemble a good campaign staff, raise enough money to support them and the organizing you want to do, particularly the monster job of getting on the damn ballots and 51 different jurisdictions and trying to break into both traditional media and social media.

So I don't want to run a half assed campaign if I do run, you know, I, I'd have, you know, seeing that we can do that. So there are also personal considerations, you know, there are things I got going on, and I could be doing. So, I'm still you know, mulling that through in my mind, I haven't even really begun to talk to people about if we could pull that campaign team together, although there are a number of greens urging me to run so that remains to be seen.

John Reimann *(After the interview was over, I asked Howie his view of the state of the labor movement. Here was his written reply)*

Howie Hawkins: I think the state of the labor movement and the union leadership in particular is weak. Clearly we are better off with a union and collective bargaining than being individuals bargaining with companies on our own. But most unions are playing defense. They tend to be conservative, trying to preserve the membership base they have and administer the benefit programs in the contract, rather than aggressively fighting the bosses on workplace grievances, for better contracts, and organizing the unorganized. And the leaders too often become detached from the workers, more interested in hobnobbing with political and business leaders than fighting them on labor issues. In most unions, workers need to organize themselves at their work sites in order to get the union to support them on grievances and force the bosses to live up to working conditions agreed to in contracts. I think the most promising development in the labor movement is the workers who are organizing unions independently of the established unions in companies like Amazon and Starbucks and the workers centers that provide immigrant and low-age workers without a union contract a place to organize themselves and get community pressure, legal aid, and training to take on issues like wage theft and abusive working conditions. That independent organizing seems to be where the new energy in the labor movement is. I don't see the unions leading a break from the Democrats into an independent working-class party. I think such a party will have to lead the unions. The unions will begin to support that party when it begins to have signification success.

John Reimann: Okay, well, thanks very much, Howie for your time. And to be continued.

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, and thanks for inviting me and yes, To be continued.

John Reiman
Howie Hawkins

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P.S.

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