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Bernie Sanders' Real 'Political Revolution' Could Happen This Fall: Sanders, Green Party's Presidential Candidate?

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The push to make Sanders the Green Party's presidential candidate

Philadelphia — Bernie Sanders, to the consternation of critics in the Democratic Party, pundits in the corporate media, and purists on the hard left, has accomplished an amazing thing. Up against Hillary Clinton, surely the biggest, best-funded corporate-backed candidate the Democratic leadership has run since Walter Mondale lost to Ronald Reagan in 1984 over three decades ago, the once obscure independent Vermont senator has battled Clinton to almost a draw, down by only some 319 delegates with nearly 900 to go (not counting the corrupt "super delegates" chosen for their fealty to party leaders, not by primary or caucus voting.)

By doing this well, as a proudly declared "democratic socialist" who on the stump has been denouncing the corruption of both the US political and economic systems, and as a candidate who has refused to take corporate money or money from big, powerful donors, instead successfully funding his campaign with only small two and three-digit donations from his supporters, Sanders has exposed not just his opponent, Hillary Clinton, but the entire Democratic Party leadership and most of its elected officials as nothing but hired corporate tools posing as progressive advocates of the people.

A Sanders-Stein Green Party dream ticket or just a dream? Sanders and Green activists are trying to make it happen.
But now Sanders faces a truly momentous choice. Defeated by the combined assault of a pro-corporate mass media and by the machinations of the Democratic Party leadership — machinations both long-established with the intent of defeating upstarts and outsiders, like

front-loading conservative southern states in the primary schedule, and current, like scheduling only a few early candidate debates and then slotting them at times (like opposite the Super Bowl) when few would be watching them — Sanders knows that barring some major surprise like a federal indictment of Clinton, a market collapse, or perhaps a leak of the transcripts of Clinton's highly-paid but still secret speeches to some of the nation's biggest banks, he is not going to win the Democratic nomination.

So does he, after spending months hammering home the reality that Clinton is the bought-and-paid candidate of the the banks, the arms industry, the oil industry and the medical-industrial complex, and after enduring endless lies about his own record spouted by Clinton and her surrogates, go ahead and endorse her as the party's standard bearer for the general election? Does he walk away and return quietly to Vermont? Or does he instead continue to fight for his "political revolution" by another route?

The first and even the second option would mean the demise of his so-called "political revolution." A Sanders endorsement of Clinton at this point would be a pathetic betrayal of all the energy and money that his fired-up backers have poured into this extraordinary campaign, and it would send a message that fighting against the nation's ruling elite is impossible, at least through the ballot box. It would also be pointless. Some 25-30 percent of Sanders backers, according to pollsters, have made it clear that they will not support Clinton no matter what — including if Sanders were to endorse her. That in itself could be enough to doom her candidacy. Furthermore, after all his well-grounded attacks on the corrupt funding of her campaign, and of her horrific record as senator and secretary of state, any endorsement he made would be seen as a joke. He would spend the next three and a half months of the general election running from reporters asking him if he "takes back" the things he had said about her earlier — her crooked speech fees from Goldman Sachs and other big banks, her default advocacy of disastrous wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria and elsewhere, etc. Most seriously, endorsing Hillary after all that earnest, heartfelt campaigning, would be a huge blow to his millions of backers and his "movement."

Just shutting up and going home, with no endorsement for Clinton, would be almost as bad, leaving his movement leaderless and thoroughly demoralized, and he'd still be besieged by journalists seeking to have him either diss or endorse Clinton.

The third option Sanders has though, is to continue his run for president, but not as a Democrat. And that option could be explosive and even revolutionary this election year, depending on how he did it.

Most states have deadlines for candidates seeking to get a ballot line as an independent candidate that are earlier than the Democratic convention in July, so running as an independent would be impossible. And a write-in campaign would be even more hopeless. But there *is another option*: Running as the presidential nominee of the Green Party, which already has a ballot line on 25 states and which doesn't hold its nominating convention until August, after both the Democratic and the Republican conventions are over.

Could Sanders run as a Green? Some of his supporters are already talking about the idea. So, it turns out, are members of the Green Party. Apparently even Dr. Jill Stein, a past presidential candidate of the Green Party and its likely candidate this year, as well as Kshama Sawant, the hugely popular socialist city councilwoman in Seattle who led that city's activists' successful fight to pass a $15/hour wage law, are writing a letter to Sanders inviting him — urging him — to enter into discussions with the Green Party about running as

its presidential candidate. Stein is apparently even willing to step aside or perhaps run as his vice presidential running mate if he were to do so. (Sawant has made an excellent argument [1] for why Sanders and the Greens should do this. She also has a petition on line for people to join in the call. It already has over 17,000 signatures.) [2]

Will Sanders seize this opportunity to continue the fight? If he is serious about inspiring a political revolution, he must. He has said he does not want to be a spoiler "like Ralph Nader" and help elect Donald Trump or some other Republican. But would that be the result of a three-way race with Sanders running as a Green? Not necessarily. In the first place, the claim that votes for Nader led to George W. Bush's 2000 victory over Al Gore is bogus. Gore lost because he embarrassingly failed to win his own state of Tennessee. As well, it is clear that it was a corrupt Republican Supreme Court that by a 5-4 vote halted the count in Florida that handed that state's electoral votes to Bush. It has been shown that continued counting and challenges to improperly rejected ballots would clearly have given Florida to Gore.

More importantly, 2016 is not 2000. The public this year is clearly sick of the two major parties, and disgusted, to an extent not seen since at least 1968, and maybe longer, by the undemocratic nature of the primaries. Incredibly, both Trump and Clinton, the likely winners of those primaries, represent the two most unpopular and disliked candidates in memory, with some 65 percent of Americans saying they dislike Trump and another 56 percent saying they dislike Clinton. Indeed, Clinton, not favored by almost half of Democrats, is so disliked *outside* the Democratic Party that there's a strong likelihood — and a fear even among Democratic leaders — that she could lose to Trump or another Republican nominee all by herself, with or without a Sanders endorsement. Meanwhile, the most liked candidate this year continues to be Sanders, whose negative rating is just 36 percent — probably all of them Republicans — and who continues to poll better against all possible Republican candidates than does Clinton. With numbers like that Sanders, if he continued to build his movement and continued to bring in new voters as he has demonstrably done in the primaries, could even contemplate winning such a general election race. He has also demonstrated his ability to attract tens of millions of dollars a month in online contributions. Running in a three-way race, he'd surely collect even more money, making him fully competitive with the two widely-loathed big-party candidates.

As the Green's presidential candidate, Sanders would have the opportunity, even if he were to lose, to catapult the Green Party, for decades stuck in limbo in the low single digits as simply a protest-vote option, into major-party status as the party of the 99% — the poor, working and progressive people of all races. That's a standing that would not go away in subsequent elections, but that instead could be built upon — especially with both major parties currently in danger of fragmenting. Given Sanders' already proven popularity, it would be impossible for the corporate media to deny him a lectern at any general election debates, as was always done to Green Party candidates and independents like Nader in the past.

Sanders and his ardent supporters, in other words, have a unique historic opportunity to shatter the asphyxiating two-party duopoly of two pro-corporate parties that has been the Bermuda Triangle of progressive politics for over a century.

Will he give up on the self-defeating, nonsensical notion of backing Hillary Clinton if she wins the Democratic Party's nomination for president? If he does, despite being clearly the most progressive candidate to make a serious run for the presidency since Eugene Debs in 1920

(when he garnered 3.4 percent of the vote running from a prison cell), Sanders will at best be consigned to a brief, dismissive footnote in future histories of the United States. If he runs in the general election as a Green, he has a chance to write a whole new chapter in those history books. Meanwhile, even if Clinton were to sign on to a platform that includes some of Sanders' proposals, she'll promptly ignore them once in office in order to serve her corporate paymasters, and if anything Sanders' insurgent successes will lead the Democratic party leadership to impose new obstacles for the next election cycle so as to the repeat of such a campaign as his even less likely going forward.

So here's an call to action:

If Bernie Sanders is reluctant to make the jump to running as a Green, he needs to be pushed by his supporters. He needs to be shown that it can be done, and that his would not be a quixotic campaign, but rather a serious effort to win the White House. How can that pushing be done? Well, think about it a minute. By the time this primary season ends in early June, Over nine million people, and maybe more, will have cast votes for Sanders. Many many more who support him passionately were denied the right to vote for him by restrictive primary rules in states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and elsewhere, rules that limited voting in Democratic primaries to people registered as Democrats (in NY you had to make that decision back in October, 2015 before Sanders was even being considered a serious candidate!). In fact, where the primaries have been open to independent voters, Sanders has usually won. Even last Tuesday, the four primaries that Sanders lost, in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Connecticut, were closed, but in Rhode Island, which was open to independents, Sanders won by 10 percent, a crucial difference not mentioned in most corporate news reports). Obviously in the general election, independents will be voting.

Imagine if even a fraction of those millions who back Sanders — his voters and those who were barred from voting for him — were to descend on Philadelphia for the July Democratic convention, which will be held on July 25-28 in, of all places, the Wells Fargo Bank Center (funded and named by one of those notorious too-big-to-fail banks that have been Hillary Clinton's faves). Imagine those Bernie backers filling the streets of this city where the nation was founded, armed with signs saying "No Hillary endorsement!" and "Go Green Bernie!" And remember, inside that aptly named convention center there will also be hundreds of elected Sanders delegates, who would be demanding the same thing of him.

How could Bernie Sanders, a 74-year-old activist veteran of so many popular movements over the years, refuse such a rousing call to action?

Links:
[1] http://www.socialistalternative.org/2016/04/17/kshama-sawant-petitioning-bernie-run-independent/
[2] http://movement4bernie.org/run-all-the-way

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