

Professor Noam Chomsky Lectures Leftists on Why They Should Vote for Neo-Liberal, Imperial War Hawk Hillary Clinton

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, August 15, 2016

In an article worthy of the convoluted and deceptive logic of the New York Times that he is so fond of criticizing, Noam Chomsky, together with John Halle, has published a piece on his [website](#) shilling for the election of Hillary Clinton. “An Eight Point Brief for LEV (Lesser Evil Voting)” also comes with a most unusual addendum: “Note: Professor Chomsky requests that he not be contacted with responses to this piece.”

Since personal responses have been ruled out, I will respond in this public forum.

Chomsky begins by writing that “presidential elections continue to pose a dilemma for the left in that any form of participation or non-participation appears to impose a significant cost on our capacity to develop a serious opposition to the corporate agenda served by establishment politicians.” Meaning: there’s a price to pay for voting or not voting – at least there “appears” to be. Such an indeterminate, truistic beginning is not an auspicious start for a linguist.

He then tells us that “many” regard the most effective response to be to vote for the “lesser evil” (LEV) Democrat in competitive “swing” states. Who the “many” are is left unsaid.

“Before fielding objections,” he continues, “it will be useful to make certain background stipulations with respect to the points [the eight point brief] below.” He implies that others will make objections when the only objections are those Chomsky will make himself, only to shoot them down. This is a classic rhetorical device used to conceal the use of straw –man argumentation. And in any case, he said at the start that he doesn’t want to get any responses, which would include objections.

He then tells us “that since changes in relevant facts require changes in tactics, proposals having to do with our relationship to the ‘electoral extravaganza’ should be regarded as provisional.” Meaning: we (whoever that is) can change our minds if “relevant facts” emerge showing that Clinton’s foreign policy “could possess a more serious menace than that of Trump.” “Could” suggests possibility, not past fact, and in any case, “most of us not already convinced that that is so will need more evidence though it’s a bit hard to know whether those making this suggestion [voting for Trump] are intending it seriously.” Meaning: Clinton’s foreign policy is less a menace than Trump’s, despite her track record, and serious people should vote for her. That “relevant facts” and “more evidence” might emerge is pure nonsense, since the facts are in. “We” aren’t going to be changing our minds..

For those who choose the “politics of moral witness,” whether religious or secular leftists, and abstain from voting, they are about “feeling good” about themselves, see voting as a form of self-expression, and don’t care about others. “When they reject LEV on the grounds that ‘a lesser of two evils is still evil’ they miss the point,” he claims. “Leaving aside the obvious rejoinder [as he doesn’t leave it aside] that this is exactly the point of lesser evil voting – i.e. to do less evil,” Chomsky makes his point, not theirs, in an act of verbal jiu-jitsu. “Moral witness” people decide to avoid choosing any evil by abstaining from a double-bind. Chomsky, however, continues with his straw-man legerdemain by writing that “those reflexively denouncing advocates of LEV on a supposed ‘moral’ basis should consider that their footing on the high ground may not be as secure as they often take for granted may be the case.” Thus he accuses “those” – whoever they are – of doing what he is doing, though his position does not rely on a ‘moral’ basis (his quotation marks speak volumes) but on serious intelligent strategy. He is not like them; he is not the type to make “frivolous and poorly considered electoral decisions [that] impose a cost.” His high ground is thoughtful, sound judgment.

He concludes by claiming that anyone serious about radical change must agree with his logic and his “cost/benefit strategic accounting.” “Those on the left who ignore it, or dismiss it as irrelevant, are engaging in political fantasy and are an obstacle to, rather than ally of, the movement that now seems to be materializing.” This bit of guilt-tripping rhetoric, with another ambiguous usage – “seems” – is typical of his entire argument.

As for his “8-Point Rationale,” it can be summed up in a few sentences.

Be practical, not moral, in making your decisions.

Don’t think of the election and your vote as part “of a corrupt system designed to limit choices to those acceptable to corporate elites.”

Donald Trump is an evil menace whose policies will impose terrible suffering “on marginalized and already oppressed populations.” These sufferings have “a high probability of being significantly greater than that which will [no use of the past tense, as though she has no foreign policy history] result from a Clinton presidency.”

That’s why you should vote for Hilary Clinton.

If you don’t, and Trump wins, you will be justly criticized.

If the left doesn’t help elect Clinton, it “will undermine what should be at the core of what it claims to be attempting to achieve.” What this core is, and how a President Clinton would contribute to its achievement, is left unspoken.

So if your Hobson’s choice is to abstain from voting and thereby not assure a Clinton victory, you are a bad leftist.

As for Jill Stein, she doesn’t figure in the professor’s lecture. A vote for her isn’t practical.

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