

Howie Hawkins: An Economic Bill Of Rights Would Address Inequality – Interview

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Eurasia Review conducted an exclusive interview with Mr. Howie Hawkins, nominated as the US Presidential Candidate for the Green Party (with Angela Walker as his vice-presidential running mate) in the 2020 presidential campaign. The interview was focused on the Ecosocialist Green New Deal program and other public policy matters that have a direct impact on the US Economy and overall societal strata. The interview was conducted by Peter M. Tase, a member of Eurasia Review's editorial team.

Mr. Howie Hawkins (born December 8, 1952) is the original Green New Dealer, the first US candidate to campaign for a Green New Deal in 2010. Hawkins is also one of the original Greens in the United States, having participated in the first national meeting to organize a US Green Party in St. Paul, Minnesota in August 1984. Hawkins became active in "The Movement" for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam in the 1960s as a teenager in the San Francisco Bay Area. Repelled by the racism and warmongering he saw in both major parties, Hawkins asked, "Where is my party?"

Outside of electoral politics, Hawkins has been a constant organizer in peace, justice, union, and environmental campaigns. When his draft number was called in 1972, Hawkins enlisted in the Marine Corps while continuing to organize against the Vietnam War. Hawkins remains a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, as well as a member of the American Legion Dunbar Post 1642 in Syracuse. For more on Hawkins' profile, read below.

'Three life and death issues'

The following is a summary of the vision and public policy actions suggested by Mr. Howie Hawkins during the interview.

"I have been leading on what I call the three life and death issues: the climate crisis, and I have an Ecosocialist Green New Deal program, a detailed budget that would get the United States to zero and negative carbon emissions and 100% clean energy by 2030," Hawkins said, adding that his vision, "involves doing a lot of it through the public sector like during World War Two, when the United States took over the manufacturing capacity in order to turn industry on a dime to what they call the arsenal of democracy So that is the scale that we have to go with [to address] this problem."

According to Hawkins, "As part of the Green New Deal, I have an economic bill of rights and that deals with the second life or death issue, which is inequality."

"Working class life expectancies have been declining in our country, so we want to end poverty, end economic despair, and basically have six economic rights: the right to a job, an income above poverty, affordable housing, comprehensive healthcare, life long public education from pre-k to post-secondary college or trade school, and secure retirement," Hawkins argued.

A third area of concern for Hawkins is what he said is the new nuclear arms race.

"The United States started modernizing, [then so did] the Russians [and] the Chinese. Everybody is modernizing. With the hypersonic nuclear arsenal, you don't have time to launch a warning, you got to launch with anticipation. Meanwhile, more tactical nukes [are] in the conventional forces, with the crackpot idea that you can escalate or deescalate to throw back a conventional assault," Hawkins said.

Hawkins said he thinks that Daniel Ellsberg, who talked about *The Doomsday Machine*, "had it right, that once the nukes start flying, its pretty much out of our control, and they are all going to fly and that would be the end of us."

More specifically, Hawkins advocated, "Nuclear disarmament initiatives, which include reducing our military profile around the world, deep cuts in the military spending, withdrawing from some of the 800 foreign military bases, and taking some direct nuclear disarmament initiatives. Pledge no first use; disarm to a credible deterrent, and then go to other nuclear powers and tell them we want complete mutual disarmament, getting them to sign onto the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, signed by 122 non-nuclear nations in July 2017."

Hawkins noted that, "The International campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons got the Nobel Peace Prize for that and hardly anybody in the United States knows this fact. None of the presidential candidates are talking about this life and death issue so that is one issue I think should be a top campaign priority."

Responds to criticism he's hurting Biden's chances

With respect to criticisms that Hawkins is hurting the Democrats chance to take back the White House, Hawkins responded:

"Of course, I am always responding to when the Democrats say 'get out of the race' and 'you are going to spoil it for Joe Biden and re-elect Donald J. Trump' and my answer to them is they are spoiling the election because, since Ralph Nader's run in 2000, we have been giving them a proven non-partisan solution to the spoiler problem. And that is to get rid of the

electoral college and have a ranked choice of national popular vote for president, and then we don't have the electoral college picking the loser of the popular vote and we don't have the problem that if you vote for what you want, you are helping your worst enemy, which we now have in the current winner system."

According to Hawkins, "those are really the four issues that make me worry in every day of my campaign. On the first three I lead and the fourth [issue] comes up when I am asked specifically by a lot of the media. Such as the New York Times newspaper, which had an editorial on May 13 criticizing the young socialists and the Jacobin Magazine publisher, [Bhaskar Sunkara](#), because he tweeted that he was going to vote for me, so someone attacked him in the New York Times."

'Medical doctors and nurses and other healthcare workers would all be salaried public employees'

In regard to the unresolved issues of Health care and Environmental policy, Hawkins shared his ambitious views, aspirations and vision for the future.

"Our public health policy [is a] single payer public health system. In the first year we go to the national health insurance, which is what the Medicare For All proposal addressed to congress is. A single public payer pays for all medically necessary services for everybody," Hawkins said, adding, "But I want to expand it into a national health service, where delivery is publicly controlled, so hospitals and clinics would be converted into public institutions."

Under Hawkins' plan, medical doctors and nurses and other healthcare workers would all be salaried public employees, and the whole system would be governed democratically from below by locally elected health boards that would plan within their districts and then federated into state level and national level for larger scale plans, so that it is a fully socialized healthcare system.

Hawkins noted, that "there was a bill for that in congress in the 1970s until 2013 it was first carried by [Ron Dellums](#) and then by [Congresswoman Barbara Lee](#) in the East Bay of San Francisco Bay Area."

"It is unfortunate that it dropped out because for a long time the debate was between employer and individual mandates that was a Nixon Plan back in the 1970s, the Kennedy Plan was a National Health Insurance and the Dellums' plan was a National Health Service, and I want to bring this back into the discussion, so immediately go to National Health Service within over ten years. I have a [program](#) on my website that describes how we would phase it in over ten years," Hawkins said.

'100% clean energy across all sectors'

In regards to Environmental Policy, Hawkins supports the [Ecosocialist Green New Deal](#), which calls for 100% clean energy across all sectors, not just energy production, but for production processes and manufacturing, agriculture, transportation of people, freight, and the powering, heating, and cooling of buildings.

“It all has to be converted, because if you just convert energy production that’s only 28% of the carbon footprint. We have to do all five sectors and we call for a restructuring of our productive system; instead of producing steel with coke ovens, we produce with electric arc furnaces, explore other ways – environmental friendly – in making cement and only this industry generates five percent of the world’s carbon footprint right there,” Hawkins said.

Hawkins stressed that another area of action is to make these manufacturing sectors reach a zero waste.

“Products have to be returned to manufacturers when used up and all materials used in manufacturing if they are not the final product, have to be recycled so that we are not extracting so much from the earth which is environmentally harmful and putting it back as a waste,” Hawkins said.

‘We have to change how we produce what we daily use’

In the opinion of Hawkins, “One of the technologies that we really have to urgently address is plastics, because we produce these synthetic petrochemically base plastics that are non-biodegradable so they break down into microparticles, so they are actually getting ingested by organisms and come up to the food chain and can be carcinogenic and disrupt intricate systems. They just found plastic at the bottom of [Mariana trench](#), that is a huge problem, so we need to have green chemistry plastics that should be biodegradable, so that when they are discarded in the environment microorganisms would break them down into harmless products that would get recycled in the biosphere.”

Hawkins said, “these are the central things we have to address because it is at the point of production where we are creating a pollution. If consumers make the best choices on what is available to them, it would reduce our carbon footprint by single digit percentages. The same strategy should be adopted with the toxic waste.”

“We have to change how we produce what we daily use and that is fundamental,” Hawkins said, adding, “There are of course environmental laws that President Trump is trying to repeal them every day. There are 64 laws repealed for the EPA, and [Trump] is aiming for 32 more to be repealed. The President is undermining laws so obviously, we need new direction in the Environmental Protection Agency and other relevant agencies like the Department of the Interior and Department of Energy.”

Background: Profile Of Howie Hawkins

As a Green Party candidate many times for local office in Syracuse, Howie Hawkins' vote grew from 3% for at-large councilor in 1993 to 48% for a district council seat in 2011. In 2015, he received 35% of the citywide vote for city auditor.

From the start, Hawkins was committed to independent working-class politics for a democratic, socialist, and ecological society. He supported the Peace and Freedom Party in 1968, the People's Party in 1972 and 1976, and the Citizens Party in 1980. Since that first national meeting in 1984, Howie has been a Green Party organizer.

As the Green Party's candidate for governor of New York in 2010, 2014, and 2018, each time Hawkins received enough votes to qualify the Green Party for a ballot line for the next four years. In 2014, he received 5 percent of the vote, the most for an independent progressive party candidates for governor in New York history except for Socialist candidates who received 5.7% in 1918 and 5.6% in 1920.

After studying at Dartmouth College, Hawkins worked in construction in New England in the 1970s and 1980s. He helped organize a worker cooperative that specialized in energy efficiency and solar and wind installations.

When the Socialist Party of Eugene Debs, A. Philip Randolph, Helen Keller, and Norman Thomas re-established itself as an independent party in 1973, Hawkins joined and remains a member. He is also a member of Solidarity, which promotes "socialism from below" and international solidarity because the fight for freedom against all dictators and imperialisms is worldwide and indivisible. Hawkins was a co-founder of the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance in 1976. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was also a leader in the anti-apartheid divestment movement to end US corporate investment in the racist system of oppression and labor exploitation in South Africa.

Hawkins moved to Syracuse in 1991 to develop cooperatives for CommonWorks, a federation of cooperatives that promoted cooperative ownership, democratic control, and ecological sustainability in the local economy.

From 2001 to 2018, Hawkins worked as a Teamster unloading trucks at UPS. Now retired, he remains a supporter of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, US Labor Against the War, the Labor Campaign for Single Payer Healthcare, the Labor Network for Sustainability, and the Labor Notes network.

Hawkins' articles on politics, economics, and environmental issues have appeared in Against the Current, Black Agenda Report, CounterPunch, Green Politics, International Socialist Review, Labor Notes, New Politics, Peace and Democracy News, Roll Call, Society and

Nature, Z Magazine, and other publications. Hawkins is the editor of, and a contributor to, *Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate* (Haymarket Books, 2006).