

SEP obtains Minnesota ballot status for presidential candidates

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Minnesota's Office of Secretary of State has determined that the Socialist Equality Party has more than met the minimum petition requirement of 2,000 signatures to place our candidates, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, on the ballot for the November 2 presidential elections. On Monday, September 13, one day before the deadline for submission of petitions, the Elections Division office determined that the 2,404 signatures obtained by SEP petitioners qualified Van Auken and Lawrence to appear on the Minnesota ballot.

The SEP's campaign received an important response from workers, students and professionals in Minnesota who have been subjected to a strong dose of the "anybody but Bush" tactic employed by the Democratic Party (known in Minnesota as the DFL or Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party), which seeks to browbeat workers into voting for John Kerry as the lesser of two evils.

Throughout much of the 20th century the DFL dominated the state's politics through a limited liberal reform policy that made concessions to workers, farmers and sections of the urban middle class. But the DFL has followed in the footsteps of the rest of the Democratic Party establishment and subordinated the living standards of Minnesota workers to the profit requirements of the global economy and transnational corporations. So much so, that the DFL's decline has put the state's 10 electoral votes up for grabs in the presidential race. Minnesota, the only state carried by Walter Mondale in his landslide loss to Ronald Reagan in 1984, is now considered a "battleground" state, closely contested between Kerry and Bush.

A number of working people eagerly signed the SEP petition on the basis of their solidarity with the ideals of socialism. Minnesota has a long tradition of socialist

political activity and working class radicalism, going back to the 1934 general strike in Minneapolis led by the Trotskyists of the Communist League of America, one of the forerunners of today's SEP.

Others signed the petition out of a deep disgust with both candidates nominated by the Republican and Democratic parties. Among the signers were also Kucinich volunteers who were appalled at the caving in of Kucinich delegates from Minnesota to the Democratic Party convention when they failed to mount a floor fight on any issues, particularly the war in Iraq.

A considerable number of those who signed initially resisted out of fear that to allow other candidates on the ballot would take votes away from Kerry. But the "anybody but Bush" mentality often crumbled when SEP petitioners pointed out the bankruptcy of a nationalist perspective of liberal reform, given the evolution of the global economy, and counterposed the necessity of establishing the political independence of the working class based on a socialist and internationalist perspective.

A significant number of those who signed were young workers and students who were motivated by opposition to the war in Iraq and hostility to the prowar stance of both Kerry and Bush.

Some hard-core DFLers who refused to sign the petition expressed open support for US imperialism and an utter indifference to the plight of the Iraqi people suffering under US occupation. When a petitioner commented to one of them that if Kerry were elected it would result in the continuing death of Iraqis, not to mention US troops, the Democrat Party loyalist responded, "I would rather have Iraqis die under Kerry than have Iraqis die under Bush."

Another Kerry supporter who refused to sign the

petition declared she had a feminist perspective as opposed to the SEP's socialist perspective. When the SEP petitioner asked, "What about extending your feminist perspective to the women of Iraq," she responded, "I don't care about Iraqi women."

Shortly after the SEP submitted its signatures to the Elections Division, supporters of Ralph Nader submitted 4,781 signatures, with the expectation that he will be challenged by the Democratic Party. DFL party chairman Mike Erlandson indicated that he might review Nader's signatures. Jenna Norwood of StopNader.com, a branch of the political action committee Democratic Action Team, told Minnesota Public Radio, "As soon as he turns his petitions in, we'll start reviewing them to make sure they're legitimate. And we'll do in Minnesota what we've done in other states."



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