SEP presidential candidate addresses London meeting

Our correspondent
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On October 16, Bill Van Auken, the presidential candidate of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, addressed a meeting in London held by the SEP of Britain and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Van Auken explained that the central aim of the SEP's campaign was to build a new socialist leadership for the American and international working class. He told the audience, "For us, the most important task of our campaign is to forge the unity of the American working class with workers in Britain and all over the world, and to bring the force of the international working class to bear on the political situation in the US itself."

He continued, "Our intervention in the 2004 election is not a matter of how many votes we can get, but how we can fight for a program that advances the class consciousness and political independence of the working class. This cannot be done outside of a genuinely internationalist perspective and practice."

Van Auken said the election took place against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Iraq. "The mass killings and immense human suffering inflicted upon the Iraqi people, however, merit not a mention in the debates between the two big business candidates."

He stressed that in opposing the war, the SEP was fighting for the working class to break from the two-party system in the US, and was opposing the camp of "Anybody but Bush"—the slogan under which various "left" groups subordinate themselves to the Democrats and Kerry.

Van Auken said that the US presidential elections, no matter who won, would only exacerbate the crisis facing the ruling class—not just in America, but all over the world—because neither candidate offered an alternative to war and social impoverishment.

Introducing Van Auken, SEP National Secretary Chris Marsden emphasised that the presidential campaign had been characterised by lies on the part of the candidates of both major parties, aided by a pliant media that virtually ignored the atrocities being committed each day in Iraq by US and British forces, and the deteriorating social conditions facing the majority of US workers.

If all that Van Auken did was to tell the truth about what was going on in the US, that would be enough to make his appearance a vital contribution. But the SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site* were aiming to do something far more fundamental—to politically mobilise the American working class and forge its unity with workers in Britain, Europe and all over the world.

In a lively and extensive discussion, audience members asked questions on the election's impact on the British government of Prime Minister Tony Blair; on how the SEP could broaden the audience for Marxist politics, including among those without access to the internet; on the role of workers from Latin America in the political life of the US; and on the situation in Iraq. A collection raised more than £500.

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