

Carl Cooley: SEP candidate for Congress

Socialist campaign reaches thousands of Maine voters

Our reporter
23 October 2004

Socialist congressional candidate Carl Cooley addressed a public meeting in Bangor, Maine, on October 17. The event, the first ever held by the Socialist Equality Party in the state of Maine, was attended by supporters of the campaign and interested voters who came from a number of towns and cities in the mid-Maine area.

Cooley is running in the easternmost part of the United States, in the largest district (Maine's 2nd Congressional District) in terms of area in the entire eastern half of the country. He is the first socialist candidate in Maine's history.

The October 17 meeting took place amidst a series of other campaign activities and events that have brought the socialist program of the SEP to many thousands of workers and young people throughout the state. Supporters of the campaign have distributed election platforms and other literature in many areas, including Bangor, Belfast and Millinocket, the hometown of the Democratic incumbent Michael Michaud.

Cooley has been interviewed by the *Bangor Daily News*, the *Kennebec Journal* in Augusta, the *Waterville Morning-Sentinel*, the *Portland Press-Herald*, and the *Belfast Republican Journal*. He has given interviews to Maine Public Radio and to the Capitol News Service, as well as to TV Channel 7 in mid-Maine, Channel 12 (Maine Public Broadcasting) and Channel 13 in Portland.

Cooley has also been invited to participate in high school events in a number of cities. At Waterville High School, a mock debate is being held, and the student who volunteered to speak on behalf of the socialist candidate will be interviewing him before the debate in order to better represent his views. In Bangor, a number of schools are joining in a mock election. The Socialist Equality campaign will have a literature table at the event, and Cooley will be given five minutes to present his program.

The SEP candidate has so far appeared in two debates alongside the Democratic and Republican candidates in the 2nd Congressional District, incumbent Michaud and his Republican opponent Brian Hamel.

A televised debate on Friday, October 15, in Lewiston revealed the fundamental differences between the socialist

candidate and his big business opponents. Only the SEP candidate denounced the war in Iraq as illegal and criminal, calling for the immediate withdrawal of all US troops from the entire region.

Only Cooley, in reply to questions on jobs, health care and education, pointed to the responsibility of the profit system for the social crisis and put forward a socialist program. He stressed the need for the restructuring of the tax system to begin to reverse the growth of economic inequality and the need for public ownership of giant corporations and banks to make possible jobs for all at a guaranteed decent wage, as well as free and high-quality health care for all, an upgraded public school system, and free higher education.

Democratic incumbent Michaud repeated Kerry's claims to oppose the "mess" created by the Bush administration in Iraq, while promising to do a better job. Republican Hamel concentrated on promises to fight for a "business-friendly climate" in Maine, to be achieved by cutting taxes for business and the wealthy even more. When the issue of abortion came up, only the socialist candidate supported the right to abortion on demand.

After the televised debate, the candidate received several phone calls from voters who had seen it and who congratulated him on his principled fight.

Another debate was held at the Fort Kent campus of the University of Maine, in the far-northeastern part of the state. Hundreds of students, faculty and community residents turned out for the event, held October 18. The socialist candidate was greeted warmly by scores of voters who shook his hand after the debate. A half dozen of those present told the candidate that he had won their vote.

At the Bangor meeting of the SEP, Cooley explained that the current situation was the outgrowth of a fundamental crisis, and not just the policies of one administration. "US corporations," he said, "seek to dominate the entire globe with a policy of militarism, starting in the Balkans, moving to the Middle East and Central Asia, and extending into Africa and Asia."

The candidate enumerated the major symptoms of capitalist decay. "The rules of ownership and the distribution of wealth

have produced an American society where 1 percent of the population controls 40 percent of the wealth. This is grotesque. Democracy is impossible under these conditions.

“We are the only major industrialized country in the world without universal health care. This is grotesque. They threaten to ‘reform’—i.e., destroy social security—in the richest country in the world. This is grotesque.

“They say, leave no child behind, while putting teachers in impossible situations and underfunding the schools. This is grotesque. Vast numbers of workers can’t even find an affordable place to live and are being driven into poverty. Is this not grotesque?”

Cooley explained, “We are here today because 3,200 people in the 2nd Congressional District of Maine signed a petition. The vast majority signed our nominating petition because they opposed the war in Iraq and wanted our troops brought home immediately.

“We made clear that we had a socialist perspective, and while not everyone who signed endorsed socialism, they wanted socialism to have a voice. They believed that they should have an alternative.

“We seek to form an independent working class party, one that is impervious to the power of the corporations—that is, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties.

“The workers of the planet create the wealth of the planet. We do the manual and the mental labor, the research and development, the long-range planning and the organizing. We do it all, yet we have no voice. Together with the *World Socialist Web Site*, we are establishing that voice, building an independent workers party with a socialist and internationalist perspective.”

Cooley was followed by Peter Daniels, a member of the WSWWS editorial board. Daniels spoke about the historic character of the 2004 election, and why it was being followed closely by hundreds of millions of working people around the world.

He explained the division of labor between the Democrats and Republicans in defending the capitalist order and maintaining a political monopoly of the US corporate elite. The differences between the two parties, he said, were not of a fundamental character, despite the partisan conflicts and mudslinging of the campaign. The two parties were arguing essentially over the best means to defend the interests of the giant banks and corporations against the working class.

“How will American capitalism restore its rate of profit? How will it be able to compete against rivals in countries where workers are paid dollars per day? Where will it find the manpower, the cannon fodder to kill and be killed in order to make the world safe for US big business and enable American corporations to plunder the world’s resources, as in Iraq?

“The present situation is just the beginning....They require the destruction of millions of jobs, the elimination of all social programs, the impoverishment of tens of millions of working

people, the forcing of millions of youth into the army and, sooner rather than later, the reintroduction of the military draft for this purpose. This cannot be accomplished peacefully or democratically. The ruling elite will have to overcome the bitter resistance of the working class, and its attacks will provoke mass struggles of a revolutionary character.”

Daniels added, “Ours is not a campaign that seeks to make a lonely protest while believing that nothing can be done. We don’t see only bipartisan attacks on the working class. We base ourselves on the growing resistance of millions, and we fight for the building of a leadership that can put an end to poverty, inequality and war.”

He spoke of the great lessons of struggles of the twentieth century, and the way in which Stalinism and the reformist and bureaucratic leaderships of the workers movement had politically disarmed the working class, while giving capitalism a new lease on life. He concluded, “There is no way forward under the old labor leaderships, or what remains of them. The ‘magic of the marketplace,’ the mantra of capitalist triumphalism, is also being exposed and discredited, but the broad masses of workers do not, as of yet, see a clear alternative.

“The Socialist Equality Party confidently presents the socialist alternative. The future does not lie with the Democratic Party. Nor does it lie with Ralph Nader or the Greens, who offer false hopes of reviving social liberalism and the Democrats, or creating a third capitalist party that will somehow reform the profit system. The only viable alternative is one that fights for the full political independence of the working class through the building of a party based on a socialist program and the international unity of the working class, which openly and confidently sets out to establish a democratically planned economy and an egalitarian society in place of the anarchy and decay of capitalism.”

Following the platform speeches, there was a lively discussion, with questions on such topics as the history of the eight-hour day and similar reforms, the SEP’s attitude toward reform and reformist movements, and the struggle against colonialism and the new drive by imperialism to colonize large sections of the world.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact