

An exchange on voting irregularities in the US elections

11 November 2004

Since the US elections, the World Socialist Web Site has received several letters about voting irregularities that suggest the Republicans stole the election in the same manner as they did in 2000. Below we post one such letter with a reply by Patrick Martin.

Friends:

Thank you for a highly successful and educational campaign.

Certainly, no one who followed the SEP's efforts to gain ballot access in Ohio and the machinations of Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell to prevent it could have been the least surprised that his turf ended up being ground-zero for yet another electoral theft and disenfranchisement.

I expect that many of those around me who saw hope in Kerry and the Democrats—many of whom are now dealing with a sort of post-traumatic stress disorder after witnessing Kerry's prostration and refusal to stand up to their own disenfranchisement—will now be in a better position to acknowledge one of the prime principles which the SEP has been promulgating throughout: that the monopoly of the two-party capitalist duopoly must be overcome for any progress to be made.

As a further "reality check," let's keep in mind that less than 50 percent of potentially eligible voters even bother to register. So that, even in a year of high turnout of registered voters—let's say 70 percent—only about 30 percent take part in the process at all. And of those, a high margin of victory is considered to be a few percentage points. What a complete farce!

Now the real work begins.

I remain in solidarity,

SZ

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear SZ,

Thank you for kind words about the SEP campaign

and your solidarity with our ballot fight in Ohio. Your additional remarks about the result of the 2004 election call for some clarification. While there were isolated cases of voters being barred from the polls or their votes set aside, the systematic, widespread dirty tricks typical of the 2000 campaign were not a decisive factor in the outcome of the 2004 election. They no doubt occurred, but Bush won by 3.5 million votes, and there is no reason to believe that many Kerry voters went to the polls and were denied ballots. One can't analyze the 2004 vote by simply applying a template from the experience in 2000. The position has become more complex.

For instance, the figures you cite about registration, though once perhaps valid, are no longer. The 2004 election saw an enormous increase in registration in many of the so-called battleground states, a phenomenon that certainly reflected the growth of political opposition to the Bush administration and its policies. In Ohio, for instance, the percentage of the eligible population who registered to vote has risen to well over 90 percent. A 70 percent turnout under those conditions suggests a more politically engaged population than in many years. The problem these voters confronted, however, was that the Democratic Party did not have a program to address real problems of economic insecurity, the war in Iraq and attacks on democratic rights. This gave the Republicans free rein to mislead people with bogus appeals about false problems: morality, the terror scare, etc. (Why should voters in rural Ohio be more swayed by fear of terrorist attacks than voters in Manhattan?) A substantial portion of working class voters fell victim to this demagoguery.

It is certainly the case, as you point out, that Bush's margin of victory cannot be considered a genuine mandate. We will undertake over the coming weeks, in the WSWS and SEP, to provide a more comprehensive

analysis of the implications of Bush's reelection, which as we warned in our initial statement, will have disastrous consequences for the American people and the world.

Sincerely,

Patrick Martin



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact