

A letter from Tom Mackaman

SEP campaign in Illinois showed the power of an international party

16 November 2004

The following statement was issued by Tom Mackaman, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for state legislature in Illinois' 103rd District.

I wish to thank the many workers, students and readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* who have supported my campaign. Because of this support, the Socialist Equality Party has been able to use a relatively minor electoral race to put before an international audience the necessity of building a party of the working class, based on socialist principles, to stop militarism, defend basic democratic rights and reorganize the economy to meet human needs.

From the Democratic Party's attempt to disqualify more than 1,000 signers of our nominating petitions, to the defense against the University of Illinois administration's attack on me for the use of my e-mail account for constitutionally protected freedom of speech, to the encouraging results we have achieved in the election—nearly 1,500 votes—our intervention has drawn out a number of important lessons for the working class. Most importantly, our experience demonstrates that the defense and expansion of basic democratic rights is indissolubly bound up with the building of a political party of the international working class.

The Illinois Democratic Party's bid to remove the SEP from the ballot and the university administration's effort to silence me offered a glimpse of the ruling elite's mortal fear that political opposition to war and the accelerated destruction of living standards will resonate deeply with growing numbers of workers and students. The Democratic Party showed that it will not—and cannot—be used as a means to oppose the war in Iraq or to defend basic democratic rights. On the contrary, throughout the election process, the

Democratic Party operated openly and ruthlessly to root out all opposition to the war, both from within its own ranks and without, trampling upon the right to vote in the process.

The SEP showed, on the other hand, that only a party basing itself on the international working class and the lessons assimilated during decades of struggle against all the agencies of capitalism will relentlessly and uncompromisingly expose the militarist and dictatorial trajectory of the US ruling elite, and reveal the basis of this tendency in objective economic changes. The SEP further showed that the WSWS can be used as a powerful tool to mobilize the only antidote—the international working class—to the destruction of democratic rights and the threat of dictatorship.

The potential for this international collaboration was shown by the powerful campaign organized by the WSWS to defend my right to be on the ballot and the scores of protest letters sent to the Champaign County electoral board by WSWS readers from Canada, England, Germany, Sri Lanka, Australia and several other countries. The web site will increasingly become the political and organizing center for the struggles of international working class to defend jobs, oppose imperialist war and build our world party.

The SEP campaign in Illinois demonstrated that the Democratic Party's fears were well founded, as we were able to participate in numerous forums and debates and make the analysis of the WSWS widely known. Our strong showing in the final polls demonstrated that, even without buying advertisements in newspapers, on television and radio, and with no paid staff, the SEP campaign was able to win significant and lasting support.

The Democratic incumbent, Naomi Jakobsson, was

able to easily defeat her Republican challenger, Deb Feinen, by running to her right. This was demonstrated by local vote totals. Precincts George W. Bush carried were also easily won by Jakobsson, who ran on a “no new tax” pledge. On the other hand, the “anybody but Bush” perspective was utilized to pressure local voters into voting a straight Democratic ticket in what was presented as an extremely tight local race between Jakobsson and Feinen. Support and sympathy for the SEP was therefore much greater than even our vote total suggests.

In the wake of the 2004 election, all of the most pressing problems confronting the working class remain, chief among them the barbarous war being waged by US capitalism against the Iraqi people.

The challenge before the international working class is more urgent than ever: it must build its own party! I invite all those who supported or followed my campaign to help with this necessary work. Read the WSWS every day and forward its articles widely! Donate to the WSWS! Contribute articles to the WSWS! Organize reading groups of workers and students in your area to study the works of Marxism and the analysis of the WSWS! Write to the WSWS about activities in your area! Join the SEP!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact