

“Antiwar” candidate Kucinich backs leading Democrat in Iowa primary

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Democratic Congressman Dennis Kucinich has announced to his supporters in Iowa that if he does not reach the 15 percent threshold of votes needed to proceed to the second round of nominating the party’s presidential candidate, he “strongly encourages” them to vote for Senator Barack Obama. This further underscores the cynical and deceptive nature of Kucinich’s campaign and his supposedly leftist, antiwar stance.

Kucinich’s statement states, “In those caucus locations where my support doesn’t reach the necessary threshold, I strongly encourage all of my supporters to make Barack Obama their second choice. Sen. Obama and I have one thing in common: Change.”

Obama is one of the top-tier Democratic candidates and is thoroughly in line with the militarist strategies of the ruling elite. Just like the Democratic Party as a whole, Obama’s criticisms of the Iraq war are not about ending it, but how to make it succeed. Currently he advocates a partial withdraw from Iraq to re-focus on the “war on terror.” He has called for more troops in Afghanistan, and unilateral US military incursions into Pakistan.

In a *Foreign Affairs* magazine piece from July 2007, Obama laid out how he intends to preserve US military dominance: “We must use this moment both to rebuild our military and to prepare it for the missions of the future. We must retain the capacity to swiftly defeat any conventional threat to our country and our vital interests. But we must also become better prepared to put boots on the ground in order to take on foes that fight asymmetrical and highly adaptive campaigns on a global scale.” His current campaign includes recommendations to add another 65,000 soldiers and 27,000 Marines to the standing military.

Congressman Kucinich is known as the “antiwar”

candidate and has suggested that he would withdraw all troops from Iraq and close military bases there. His willingness to back the openly militarist Obama demonstrates—far more than his pseudo-leftist rhetoric—that he has no intention of challenging the geopolitical interests of American imperialism.

Noting that all of the leading Democratic candidates have continued to fund the war, including Obama, Kucinich states, “their judgment was wrong. They have repeatedly said ‘all options’ are on the table with respect to Iran. Intelligence reports revealing that Iran abandoned its nuclear weapons program four years ago again demonstrates that their judgment was wrong.” Thus, Obama funds the criminal enterprise in Iraq and threatens to launch war against Iran but that should not prevent Kucinich’s supporters from voting for the Illinois senator.

With the elections nearly a year away Kucinich is already retracing the steps he took in the 2004 presidential election. Throughout that year Kucinich denounced the war and corporate America and insisted that mass pressure could push the Democratic Party to the left. Then, prior to the Democratic convention, Kucinich and his supporters dropped their opposition to the right-wing Democratic platform and lined up behind pro-war candidate John Kerry, with Kucinich declaring, “The word is unity. That is the operative word.”

With the announcement that Kucinich’s supporters in the Iowa caucus should endorse Obama, the Ohio congressman has made it clear he is again seeking to bolster the Democratic Party, which has been further discredited by its collaboration with the Bush administration since taking over the majority of the US Congress in the 2006 elections.

One year after taking control Congress, none of the

promises of the Democrats have been carried through. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, with the Democrats delivering critical support for over \$200 billion more in funding. Domestic spying, torture, and other attacks on democratic rights continue unabated. The living standards of ordinary people continue to fall, while the wealthiest continue to enjoy massive tax breaks and record profits and bonuses.

In face of this sordid record, the Kucinich campaign serves to appeal to the broad hostility over the war and inequality, and channel it back into the two-party system. At the announcement of his current presidential run in December of 2006, Kucinich stated, “At this moment, people’s trust in government is on the line. Trust in the Democratic Party is on the line.” He added that there is a “sacred responsibility” to “protect people’s faith in not just our party, but in the political process itself.”

Aside from his slavish insistence of supporting the Democratic Party, the purportedly left-wing program Kucinich offers a mix of the typical reformist proposals and economic nationalism that has proved to be an utter failure in the course of the last century. This is combined with a substantial dose of hypocrisy.

A recent press release claims that Kucinich is the only presidential candidate who has “the ability and the foresight to make the right decisions at the right time. And when you’re talking about life and death decisions, a belated and apologetic ‘I made a mistake’ is not acceptable.” Nowhere is it mentioned that shortly after 9/11 he voted for the “Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists,” which allowed the Bush Administration to begin the war in Afghanistan and roll back democratic rights.

Notably, in all of the “strength through peace” rhetoric on Kucinich’s campaign web site there is no mention of the war in Afghanistan, and the immense social catastrophe it has created. In the United Nations global human development index Afghanistan has fallen to 174 out of 178 countries, with declines in life expectancy, literacy, nutrition, and further decay of social infrastructure. At the same time the brutal counter-insurgency program of the US military continues to shed the blood of innocent Afghans. Presumably, though, the lack of comment on Kucinich’s web site indicates that Afghanistan is still the “good war.”

Kucinich presents himself as a populist, with election claims to rework health care, end poverty and reverse environmental degradation. Yet he steadfastly defends the two-party system, which upholds the capitalist social and economic setup. His campaign web site even has as a topic entitled “Saving Capitalism,” containing nationalist economic positions of regulation and protectionism.



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