

# CAUS meeting endorses SEP presidential campaign

By Shannon Jones  
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Supporters of the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS) in Detroit voted to endorse Socialist Equality Party candidates Jerome White for president and Phyllis Scherrer for vice president at their monthly meeting last week.

The vote followed a lively discussion on the program of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the issues raised by the election.

CAUS Chairman Lawrence Porter gave the opening report. Porter outlined the basic principles on which the SEP campaign was based. He explained that the SEP placed the fight for the international unity of the working class at the center of its campaign. Workers in all countries and of all races and nationalities faced a common oppressor, the transnational banks and corporations, he stressed.

The SEP, said Porter, fights for social equality. Decent paying jobs, access to health care, quality education and the right to utilities, he argued, were basic necessities in a modern, mass society and had to be available to everyone. They were not privileges, but inalienable social rights, and had to be fought for by the working class. Society, said Porter, had to be reorganized on a humane and rational basis, rather than squander billions on the incomes of the super-rich.

Porter explained that the SEP opposed militarism and the growing assault on Democratic rights. He warned that the Obama administration, after launching war against Libya, was now preparing for war against Syria and Iran. This carried the danger of a wider war, including with Russia and China.

Porter said that central to the SEP election campaign was the fight to end the political subordination of the working class to the Democrats and Republicans, the two parties of big business. Porter explained that while millions of workers had voted for Barack Obama

expecting change, his administration had continued and expanded the right-wing policies of the Bush administration. The working class had to break with both parties of Wall Street and mobilize its independent political strength to reshape society in its own interests.

In the course of the ensuing discussion CAUS supporters asked many questions about the program of the SEP.

Several CAUS supporters wanted to know if Obama's policies were the result of his "hands being tied" by laws passed under the Bush administration. Porter pointed out that Obama had bailed out Wall Street while launching attacks on teachers with his "Race to the Top" program and had refused aid to bankrupt states and cities. The White House had expanded the assault on Democratic rights carried under by the Bush administration by declaring that the president could order the indefinite detention without trial or assassination of US citizens.

Another question that came up in the course of the discussion was the character and role of the unions. "The unions are the opposite of what they were founded on," said Porter. "The working class needs new organizations. We are calling for the formation of rank-and-file committees."

Jim Brewer, another SEP supporter, explained that the unions were not organizations that defended the interests of the working class but those of a privileged bureaucracy. He recounted the experience of workers at Cooper Tire in Findlay, Ohio. After three months of being locked out by the company the workers' bargaining agent, the United Steelworkers (USW), forced an end to the conflict with a sellout contract that conceded nearly all of the company's demands. During the course of the lockout, the USW deliberately kept the Ohio workers fighting on their own, forcing

through a separate contract settlement at the company's Texarkana, Arkansas plant to maintain the isolation of the struggle in Findlay.

Etta, a longtime CAUS supporter, strongly agreed with the SEP's opposition to the Obama administration's preparations for war with Iran. "If I have bombs and more bombs, and then my friend Israel has bombs, who needs to get rid of this [Iran's] stuff? Instead of worrying about Iran getting rid of something, wouldn't it be a demonstration of humanity to say, let's get rid of this hardware ourselves?"

Gloria, who was attending her first CAUS meeting, said, "I want to know more. Last time I voted Green, because I am not Republican or Democrat. I had never heard about the SEP. The government is supposed to be of the people and for the people. What part of that do they not understand?"

"When I approach people about voting another way versus Democrat or Republican, one of the issues that I face is that there is a fear that if you don't vote for a Democrat, you are going to get a Republican ... you are going to split the vote. So therefore you have to choose between the lesser of two evils. You are saying here we are not going to choose between the lesser of two evils, we are going to build our base, lay a foundation and eventually one day we will get there?"

Porter explained that the Green Party did not represent an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. In Germany, where its representatives had joined the government, it had backed military intervention in Afghanistan.

All of the existing political parties and trade unions have nothing to offer the working class, Porter said. A new socialist political movement of the working class had to be built and the SEP is spearheading this fight, he continued.

Following the discussion, CAUS members voted to endorse the campaign of White and Scherrer, and several of those attending the meeting expressed interest in participating in an election committee to help build support for the campaign.

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