Lesson of the Wisconsin recall

Time for labor to reject the bosses’ parties and fight for all workers

Last year, hundreds of thousands of snow-covered Wisconsinites showed labor how to fight austerity. Workers and students occupied the capitol to resist Governor Scott Walker’s budget cuts and attacks on collective bargaining. They demanded jobs and healthcare for all, and many were ready to use labor’s most powerful weapon, the general strike.

So how could Walker prevail in a recall election just 16 months later? It wasn’t just due to corporate cash. The key problem is that the recall diverted the movement’s full energy into the electoral effort rather than keeping the protest movement alive. As a final blow, Democratic Party strategists dumped labor rights and other progressive issues that should have been at the heart of the effort.

Now, union leaders are raising the specter of a national Walker-style juggernaut to convince unionists that they have to campaign for Democrats again. There could not be a more dead-end strategy.

Two parties, one war on workers

Republican governors have led the attack on public employee union rights and benefits, and even managed to pass right-to-work legislation in union-heavy Indiana. Meanwhile, Democratic governor Jerry Brown has his own plan to gut the pensions of California’s public workers. And Congressional Democrats continue to approve trillions for imperialist wars — money that should be spent on healthcare, education, and other social services.

Obama: change the bosses like

The president did not set foot in Wisconsin to defend union rights. He was busy passing pro-corporate free trade agreements with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia (the nation with the world’s highest murder rate for unionists). His education “reform” agenda, which relies on high stakes testing and non-union charter schools, is an attack on teachers’ unions. And his administration has deported immigrant workers at a much higher rate than during Bush’s time.

Is there a labor party in the house?

If only. Independent political action would be far better than tailoring labor’s agenda to what the Democrats are willing to do — a process that sells out workers, especially the most exploited: women, people of color, immigrants.

Working people look to the unions to bring the class together to struggle for economic and social justice. Such a movement could also dispel resentment over union members’ wages, benefits, and pensions by championing the needs of low paid and unemployed workers.

Last year’s successful campaign to repeal an anti-union law in Ohio shows that grassroots organizing works. Imagine how much more power those fighting in the trenches would have if they had a mass party that could challenge the bosses’ politicians.

Protest the twin party scam!

Clearly, voting for the “lesser evil” only enables both parties as they march to the right. AFSCME leaders have already endorsed Obama, but members are not bound by this. Instead write in truly pro-labor and antiwar candidates Stephen Durham for president and Christina López for vice president. On the back of this flyer are these Freedom Socialist candidates’ ideas for how to provide jobs for all, end discrimination, and restore and expand social services.

This is what workers really need, and this November we can vote for it! Let’s protest the twin-party con game and move the political debate to the left.

Issued by:

Freedom Socialist 2012 Presidential Campaign
Stephen Durham for President — Christina López for Vice President
VoteSocialism.com

If you would like to meet up here at the convention, call Steve at 206-915-1910.
Stephen Durham for President
A strong workers’ rights advocate who has long fought racial and sexual discrimination, Durham speaks three languages and is building ties with unionists and feminists in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Christina López for Vice President
A socialist feminist champion of immigrant and reproductive rights, López defends those most hurt by the economic crisis as an organizer of a grassroots campaign against Washington state budget cuts.

They stand for:

Full employment
Disarm the US war machine and use the money to create a massive, publicly funded training and jobs program at union wages with childcare available. Repeal union-busting laws.

Government that helps the needy, not the greedy
Restore funds and programs that help seniors, the poor, children, single mothers and the homeless. No cuts to Social Security. Free medical care for all, including reproductive services and abortion. End foreclosures and expand low-cost public housing. Nationalize the banks and energy industry under the management of workers’ committees.

Multicultural education for all ages
Tax corporate profits to pay for quality public education through college and trade school. Cancel student debt.

Freedom of association & speech
Repeal the Patriot Act and indefinite military detention of US and foreign citizens. Dismantle the FBI. Outlaw covert police spying and disruption of free speech activities.

Solidarity with workers worldwide
Overturn trade deals that impoverish workers here and around the world. Bring all US troops home. Nationalize US corporations that pollute, exploit and support corrupt regimes abroad. For planetary environmental sanity and a socialist world!

Freedom from discrimination
Equal rights for all regardless of race, age, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, immigration status, or physical ability. Restore affirmative action programs. Dismantle Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security.

Labor endorsers of the Durham-López Campaign
Ray Berard, AFT Local 2121*; Dr. Natalie Boero, California Faculty Association*; Patrick Burns, retired Carpenters Local 30*; Tricia Coley, IBEW Local 46*; Mary Ann Curtis, AFSCME Retirees Chapter 36*; Mark Drummond, SEIU Local 925*; Chris Faatz, ILWU Local 5*; Bryan Fabert, SEIU Local 775*; Doug Frechin, Teamsters Local 174*; Steve Hoffman, AFSCME 304*; Phyllis Holliday, former member HERE Local 2*; Michael Hureau, labor activist; Fred Hyde, retiree AFSCME 304*; Kathy King, AFSCME Local 435*; Glenn Kirkindall, UFCW Local 555*; Don Larson, retired Carpenters Local 30*; Channing MacFadden, ATU Local 587*; Laura Mannen, Forest Grove Education Association*; Richard L. Merrell, Air Line Pilots Association*; Scott Merrell, UFCW Local 21*; Moïsés Montoya, IFPTE Local 21*; Dr. Steven Mulrooney, Doctors Council SEIU Local 10MD*; Donald A. B. Nemeyer, former AFT*; Henry Noble, IAM District 751*; Beatriz Paez, SEIU Local 99*; Tom Pafford, AFL-CIO United Association, Local 725*; Alise Sochaczewski, NUHW*; Tanya Smith, CWA Local 9119*; Everett Stewart, ATU Local 587*; Adrienne Weller, retiree AFSCME Local 328*; Dr. Susan Williams, Doctors Council SEIU Local 10MD*; Nellie Wong, past University Professional & Technical Employees*; Roger Yockey, retiree UFCW*

* for identification purposes only