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'Nadertrading' hits the Net

**■ Green Party supporters
have organized a nation-wide
vote-trading campaign**

By **Lindsay Buchele**
Oregon Daily Emerald

Supporters of presidential candidate Ralph Nader believe they have found a way to help Vice President Al Gore win the general election, while helping Nader earn five percent of the popular vote in order to receive federal campaign financing for the Green Party in the future.

Several Web sites, including the recently shut down Votewap2000.com, set up a system where voters can take part in "voter pairing."

The system targets voters in "swing states," or states that are so close in the polls that either Gore or Texas Gov. George W. Bush could win the electoral votes. With pairing, Gore supporters who live in states where Bush is predicted to win will vote for Nader. In return, Nader supporters living in swing states will vote for Gore.

Nader support is strong in a number of swing states, including Oregon and Washington. But because he has no chance of winning the popular

vote in these states, his supporters are faced with a dilemma: They can either vote for Nader, attempting to help him gain the 5 percent, or they can vote for Gore, in hopes of stopping Bush from winning the presidency.

Nader spokeswoman Stacy Malkan said her campaign wasn't interested in giving votes to Vice President Al Gore.

"Some people are encouraging tactical voting, but our campaign is encouraging people in every state to vote for Ralph Nader," Malkan said.

The web sites votewap2000.com, nadertrader.org, voteexchange.com and winincampaign.org either discuss how to set up a voter exchange or actually pair up voters through e-mail. Votewap2000.com and voteexchange.com are two sights that pair voters up, something that is illegal in California and Oregon.

As of Oct. 30, California Secretary of State Bill Jones notified VoteSwap2000.com it was in violation of California state law, which prohibits entering into a contract where something of monetary value is given in exchange for a vote. VoteSwap2000.com then turned off its software in order to comply with the state's law.

"Anytime a voter agrees to vote a particular way and enters into a verbal contract with someone else, they are in violation of the statute," said Paddy McGuire, chief of staff in the Secretary of State's office.

McGuire said some voter trading sites are OK, because they include discussions and suggestions rather than actually pairing voters up.

Nadertrader.org is considered a discussion site and is legal in Oregon. Scott Aaronson, a computer science student at the University of California, Berkeley, has been running a link off of the nadertrader.com site in support of voter exchange web sites.

"Nadertrading is an excellent idea," Aaronson said. "It's voting in a way that doesn't change someone's beliefs."

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office has written to other sites that are providing voter pairing, such as voteexchange.com, asking them to stop running the site.

"One difficulty with Internet commerce is so many sites are based in states that are out of our jurisdiction," McGuire said. "There's not a lot that can be done to stop them."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

AN APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE

By Concerned Writers, Scholars, Artists, and Activists 2000

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, are deeply disturbed by the continuing national campaign by Ralph Nader, which is growing ever more harmful as Election Day approaches.

It is now plain that Mr. Nader is willing to make incredible

statements and take unbelievable positions in order to gain the 5% of the vote he seeks. Instead of a liberal or progressive force, his campaign now seriously threatens to elect the dangerous George W. Bush to the presidency. Despite Mr. Nader's past great

achievements, and despite the good faith of his rank-and-file supporters, he has now become a wrecking-ball campaign -- one that betrays the very liberal, humane and progressive values it claims to uphold.

Recently, Mr. Nader has said that:

✓ IF GIVEN A CHOICE BETWEEN BUSH AND GORE, HE WOULD VOTE FOR BUSH

Mr. Nader would happily throw the country to the Right, placing the Supreme Court, the rest of the federal judiciary, and the entire executive regulatory system including the Food and Drug Administration in the hands of the most retrograde elements in our political life. (Outside Magazine, August 2000; see www.outsidemagazine.com/magazine/200008/200008camp_nader1.htm)

✓ ENVIRONMENTAL REACTIONARIES SERVE A POSITIVE FUNCTION

Mr. Nader has argued that past appointments like Reagan's Secretary of the Interior James Watt usefully serve as provocateurs for change. He has also denounced the Sierra Club and other long-standing allies for their, "servile mentality in not supporting him." (New York Times, October 29, 2000; www.msnbc.com/news/481662.asp)

✓ THE REPEAL OF ROE V. WADE WOULD BE OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE

Never a champion of women's rights, Mr. Nader claims that abortion rights might just as well be left up to the states.

(This Week with Sam Donaldson, October 29, 2000, transcript at www.abcnews.com)

✓ ALL U.S. AID TO ISRAEL SHOULD BE CUT

No matter what one thinks of the current situation in the Middle East, such rhetoric is not only irresponsible, it is inflammatory. (Common Dreams News Center, October 24, 2000.)

But these are only the latest thoughtless utterances from Mr. Nader. From the start, he said his effort would help the Democrats gain votes in the House of Representatives — while at the same time he has vilified the Democrats as no different than the Republicans. His supporters in various states talk about a "risk-free" Nader vote in places where Gore or Bush are strong, "even as Mr. Nader himself aggressively looks for votes in liberal cities and on college campuses in vital toss-up states." (These toss-ups now may well include California.) Should Governor Bush be elected President, and the Republicans hold the Congress, conservative

Republicans will have virtually captured firm control of all three branches of the Federal Government for the first time since 1930. Mr. Nader, who is also supporting Green congressional candidates who have no chance of winning in some tight races, apparently does not care about this — or worse, seeks it, under the naive impression that it will heighten social contradictions and lead to what he has called "a progressive convulsion" — that is, the worse, the better. This is sectarianism of a familiar sort in the century just past — a sectarianism that had reaped nothing but political catastrophe.

We implore all liberal and progressive voters to reject the Nader campaign on November 7 and to vote for Gore and Lieberman.

Signatories (partial list; list in formation)
Benjamin Barber, Rutgers University
Paul Berman, writer and critic
Michael Bérubé
Marco Calavita, film critic
Ellen Chesler, writer and critic
Mitchell Cohen, City University of New York, Dissent
Bogdan Denitch, City University of New York
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