

Growing Progress

Cobb, Kucinich share similar message with Eugene.

If you aren't familiar with the name David Cobb, you're not alone. And that may say more about the current floundering of the Green Party, of which Cobb is the front-running nominee for presidential candidate, than any other factor.

In fact Cobb, who will be in Eugene Thursday April 15, has as his primary goal not winning the election, but growing his party. "The Green Party is poised to be the electoral arm of the growing movement for peace, justice, ecology and democracy," he says. Although he calls George Bush "a big problem," and says his foreign policy "puts us at war with the rest of the world," Cobb says the real problem is "a continuing empire of the military-industrial complex and the transnational corporate empire that supports it."

Cobb believes the Greens, not the Democrats, are the way to pave a better future.

not factor.

"I'd rather go into states where Kerry or Bush are gonna win so we can say, 'Don't waste your vote on a foregone conclusion.'"

But, Cobb adds, it's a complicated strategy. "Some swing states we must campaign in." Like Iowa, where election law (written by Dems and Reps) says a minor party must get 3 percent of the vote for a presidential candidate to maintain a ballot line.

"I pledged to campaign aggressively and hard in Iowa to secure 3 percent. It's unfortunate, but it's what the election code says." Ultimately, Cobb says, after his primary goal of building the party, his secondary goal is that the election culminates with Bush out of the White House. And, he adds, "Wherever possible, we want to achieve both."

Back to the Democratic primaries. If it's "where progressive politics goes to die," then how does he explain Dennis Kucinich, who came through Eugene again Wednesday,

'The Democratic Party presidential primary process is the place where progressive politics goes to die.'

- David Cobb, Green Party Presidential Candidate

The 40-year-old former attorney from Texas, who's now situated in Humboldt County and an organizer with Democracy Unlimited, worked actively on the campaigns of Jesse Jackson in 1984 and Jerry Brown in '88 and '92. "I can sum up in one sentence what I learned in those campaigns," says Cobb. "The Democratic Party presidential primary process is the place where progressive politics goes to die."

Despite the enthusiasm and excitement generated, at the end of the day, he says, "it's the big money and corporations that control the process and squash us and we don't have something that lasts to build upon."

And he wants to build something. In fact, Cobb proves that one person really can make a difference. He helped put Greens on the ballot in Texas in 2000 by collecting 76,000 signatures in 75 days from registered voters who had ignored the Democratic and Republican primaries.

And Greens do grow. In 1996, with Ralph Nader as presidential candidate, there were 10 organized state Green parties in the U.S. Five had a ballot line. That year, 40 Greens were elected across the country. By 2000, again with Nader at the helm, the Greens had 21 organized state parties. Ten states had a ballot line and 87 Greens countrywide were elected in local contests.

This year, there are 44 organized state Green parties, 23 have a guaranteed ballot line, and 205 Greens sit in elected office across the country. "We are getting larger, stronger and better organized with every election cycle," says Cobb.

But Cobb is very clear he doesn't want to see what happened in 2000, with Nader potentially pushing the swing states right into Republican hands, happen again.

Cobb wants to employ a strategic states campaign, where the Green party presidential candidate focuses energy and resources into those states where the electoral college does

April 14 in anticipation of the May 18 primary, and is trumpeting the message that the Democratic Party must lead us out of the Iraq war?

While Cobb concedes that Kucinich is expressing his values and principles without selling out, "he is already irrelevant in the 2004 elections cycle," he says, adding that Kucinich is merely keeping progressives in the Democratic Party who ought to leave and join the Greens.

Yet Kucinich, who knows the show went to Kerry after the New Hampshire and Iowa primaries, shrugs off any accusations of irrelevance. As long as he's in the race, he can draw attention to what progressives want.

"People are increasingly concerned about peace," he says. Kucinich has loudly dismissed the June 30 transfer of power in Iraq as a hoax, and says it may keep the U.S. in the war so long "we could be facing another Vietnam." He says he's remained in the race because he "made a commitment" and because "the Democratic Party must stand for peace." He says he wants to "persuade the party that Americans are fed up with the failed policies of a war president, and want something more than a Democratic version of a Republican war."

As to his return to Eugene and his lengthy presence in Oregon, Kucinich says it's not only that Oregon has one of the last primaries, but that "people in Oregon are hearing." His views on universal healthcare, the environment, labor, and who can forget — his U.S. Department of Peace — resound loudly with those in this state.

Cobb and Kucinich are each stumping for progress, and ultimately want Bush out of the White House. Perhaps that place of agreement is the nexus to build upon, a place of peace.

David Cobb will appear at the Green Party presidential debate with Tim Hermach and Kitty Piercy at 5pm, Thursday, April 15 at the Strand, 8th and Charnelton.

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