

Muhammad campaign rocks Dem machine

by Debra Hanania Freeman

In an incredible display of arrogance, the Prince George's County, Maryland Democratic Party machine claimed victory for incumbent Congressman Steny Hoyer in the primary election on Sept. 11, reporting that Hoyer had won 79% of the vote compared to 21% conceded to Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, despite widespread charges of vote fraud.

In one of the few races to spark voters' interest in an otherwise dull election year, Abdul Alim Muhammad mounted the stiffest challenge that Hoyer, the fourth-ranking House Democrat, has faced in his long career as a fixture in the state's Democratic Party machine. Hoyer, who repeatedly refused to debate Muhammad, had claimed that he did not feel threatened by his opponent. However, for the first time in nine years, Hoyer was forced to spend a significant portion of his \$400,000 war chest to run an aggressive radio and television campaign.

Dr. Muhammad, a surgeon and the national spokesman for Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, forged a broad coalition of popular support with the largest volunteer force in Maryland history. The weekend before the election, the candidate was accompanied by well-known Chicago Congressman Gus Savage and some 250 volunteers, in a campaign blitz that distributed over 300,000 pieces of literature in 48 hours.

Vital issues raised

Prince George's County is the nation's largest black suburban community. It is also said to be the most affluent. But the district has been hard hit by the Bush administration's flea-market economic policies, and is posting the highest rates of unemployment in county history. So, it came as no surprise when Dr. Muhammad, a first-time candidate, received the warm reception he did among voters.

He reached out to the county's majority black population, focusing on their political and economic disenfranchisement. He stressed issues such as affordable housing, education, and drug and crime prevention. He was also the only candidate who addressed the issue of the AIDS epidemic that is sweeping the nation.

Muhammad enlarged the campaign discussion beyond domestic issues. He had traveled to Panama shortly before

the illegal U.S. invasion and had accused the Bush administration of genocide in the murder of thousands of innocent civilians. He has also been an outspoken critic of the administration's current Middle East adventure, stressing that the only way to win peace in that region is through a policy of economic and especially infrastructure development.

Widespread vote fraud

When the polls opened, the local Democratic Party machine was shocked to find pollwatchers from Muhammad's campaign at virtually every precinct. Many remarked that they had not opened polls in the presence of pollwatchers since 1962. Although many of the pollwatchers had never participated in an election before, they were well trained in ballot security procedures and armed with copies of Maryland's Election Code.

But, the Democratic Party machine, notorious for Election Day dirty tricks and vote stealing, was undaunted. Throughout the day, a team of high-powered civil rights attorneys was swamped with calls from the field documenting the party apparatus's blatant disregard for the law. In precinct after precinct, Muhammad pollwatchers were not permitted to inspect machines before the polls opened, as is customarily allowed. In some precincts, they were barred from the premises. Where watchers were permitted inspection, there were widespread reports of defective machines, broken seals, and machines with votes recorded on them prior to the polls' opening.



Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, at the podium following a speech to a conference of the International Caucus of Labor Committees on Sept. 2.

Stuart Lewis

Four primaries show LaRouche Dems' backing

The Sept. 11 primaries in Maryland, New York, Minnesota, and Wisconsin provided further evidence that the LaRouche wing of the Democratic Party is expanding its influence among American voters. Faced with an expanding depression at home, and a Vietnam-like war deployment abroad, Americans are responding to the LaRouche candidates' calls for industrial and agricultural expansion, support for LaRouche's Productive Triangle program for a unified Germany, and an end to the Mideast war.

In Maryland, where cargo tonnage passing through the Port of Baltimore is down 14% compared to 1989, and the number of bankruptcies filed in June shows a 50% increase over June last year, congressional candidate Cornelius Morgan polled 38% in the 2nd C.D. "Neil" Morgan was well-known for his attacks on the anti-human policies of the Anti-Defamation League, and his stand against the "Jap-Bashing" of Republican incumbent Helen Delich Bentley. Morgan repeatedly stated that "the U.S. should ally itself with Germany and Japan, rather than making them our enemies." Six LaRouche Democrats running for the Maryland House of Delegates received votes in the

20-25% range, and Pat Albright, running for State Democratic Central Committee on the Eastern Shore, won her seat.

In New York State, LaRouche Democrat Keith Perez received 34% of the vote in the 29th C.D., which includes part of the City of Rochester. Breaking through the appalling lack of policy discussion in the media, best characterized as "whatever you do not speak about, does not exist," Perez called himself an Old Democrat, "believing like LaRouche or John F. Kennedy that industrial and agricultural progress is the backbone, the very source of existence of this nation." The district Democratic machine reacted by challenging Perez's ballot status, thus delaying his campaign, and when that failed, fielding another candidate with the avowed purpose of stopping Perez, who was denounced as "not a real Democrat."

In Minnesota, where Governor Rudy Perpich's "New Age" speculation policies have produced glittering but empty office buildings and condos along the Minneapolis waterfront while Mississippi River trade declines, LaRouche Democrat Gary Legare polled 26% in the 2nd C.D. primary, and three LaRouche candidates for state representative received 21-23% of the vote. In Wisconsin, LaRouche Democrat Peter Taylor received 20% in the 5th C.D. against incumbent Jim Moody, one of those who had complained about the strength of the LaRouche movement on the floor of Congress.

The pattern continued throughout the day, with reports of election judges tampering with the backs of machines, accompanying voters into the voting booths, and, in several cases, instructing certain voters to vote on as many as three or four machines. When pollwatchers challenged improper procedures, they were ousted by the judges.

At the end of the day, in almost every precinct, pollwatchers were not permitted to view vote totals on the machines. In a significant percentage of precincts, the number of votes the machines recorded exceeded the judges' own records of the numbers who had actually voted.

The irregularities were so widespread, that it is impossible to ascertain who actually won the election. However, political observers agree that it is absurd to credit Abdul Alim Muhammad, a tremendously popular challenger who campaigned aggressively, with a mere 21%, especially since statistically, almost anyone who opposes an incumbent in a two-way race is virtually assured 20% of the vote. One political veteran said, "Sure, it would have been more credible to give Muhammad 40%, but the machine is sending him a message. They don't care if the theft is blatant. They're trying to demoralize his supporters and black voters in general. They're saying, 'You'll never upset the machine.'"

If the mood at Dr. Muhammad's campaign headquarters on election night was any barometer, that message didn't get through. Several hundred campaign workers waited until midnight to hear from their candidate and, despite the fact that most had been on their feet for 20 hours, they were exuberant.

When Dr. Muhammad and his family arrived, they were accompanied by Congressman Savage, who reminded the crowd that he had run five times before he finally took his congressional seat. Dr. Muhammad, who made clear that he was not ready to concede to Steny Hoyer, read a message of congratulations from Minister Louis Farrakhan, who noted that as the first member of the Nation of Islam to seek a congressional seat, Muhammad's campaign had opened a new era. He said, "You didn't just open the door, you knocked it down! Now, we are going to walk through it!"

Attorneys for the campaign are still compiling evidence of irregularities, and further legal action is expected. Whatever happens in that regard, however, one thing is clear: Abdul Alim Muhammad brought hundreds, and probably thousands of citizens into the electoral process in an active way for the first time in their lives and, as a result, politics in Prince George's County will never be the same.