

Tab 1

TITLE: Mother Jones Was an Open Socialist

Caption: In a reply to the Socialist Majority Caucus, Annie W argues for the importance of running labor candidates for office who are democratic socialists drawn from the rank-and-file of the labor movement. She urges delegates to DSA's 2025 convention to vote no on R20 unless amended by [R20-A1: Democratic Socialists and the Labor Movement Need Each Other](#).

Socialist Majority Caucus (SMC) has put forward [a resolution](#) that, in essence, proposes that DSA liquidate the distinctly socialist identity of our electoral program by running "labor candidates" instead of open democratic socialists, despite DSA proving time and again [that socialist candidates can win the support of working-class constituencies](#).

Without question, DSA should run union members for office. Those of us in the labor movement know that our union comrades are some of the most dedicated, politically developed members of the working class. They know better than anyone what it feels like to live with a boot on your neck. And with the union bureaucracy unable to shift the policies of the Democratic and [Republican](#) Parties, no formation is better equipped than DSA to run rank-and-file candidates for office on a platform of political freedom and social transformation for working people. That platform, in two words, is democratic socialism.

This is why members of Marxist Unity Group, Springs of Revolution and Bread & Roses put forward an amendment to SMC's resolution: [R20-A01: Democratic Socialists and the Labor Movement Need Each Other](#). Our amendment redefines labor candidates as *democratic socialists* drawn from the *rank-and-file* of the labor movement. Our amendment would integrate these candidates into DSA's broader electoral project by making them part of the National Electoral Committee's priority slate, rather than siloing them from this [successful model](#) into a separate slate.

Confusingly, David Duhalde of SMC has hinged [his response to the amendment](#) on a series of historical socialist candidates who emerged from the labor movement of the late 19th century, all of whom ran on a Socialist Party ballot line (or, in the case of Mother Jones, its precursor the Social Democratic Party). Marxist Unity Group are eager students of Eugene Debs, but his case and that of other Socialist Party candidates prove our point: it is possible and desirable to run labor candidates as open socialists, and unnecessary to downplay our politics in campaigns for office. Duhalde argues for more "flexibility" to choose candidates outside DSA's active layer who are not committed to what he calls "socialist identitarianism." However, our amendment would not preclude DSA from running a candidate who is less active in DSA, and Duhalde himself contradicts his argument against "socialist identitarianism" by citing examples of candidates who ran as open socialists. Despite the examples he provides, Duhalde's "flexibility" doesn't come from the history of the Socialist Party, nor from DSA's existing electoral program, but from the moribund period between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of DSA, where left electoral projects (like Ralph Nader's 2000 Presidential campaign) largely eschewed socialism

in favor of progressivism. It is an argument to return to a strategy that downplays socialism to the point of irrelevance in both the electoral sphere and the labor movement, rather than principled democratic socialism in both. Debs himself took an even sterner stance than our amendment when he said [that](#):

*Of course we want the support of trade-unionists, but only of those who believe in socialism and are ready to vote and work with us for the overthrow of capitalism.*

Duhalde muddles the issue by framing it as a question of whether socialists and the labor movement are equal partners. The actual question at stake is much more straightforward—will we endorse candidates who do not publicly identify as socialists? Or will we endorse candidates who identify as socialists, just like Eugene Debs and Mother Jones, just like Zohran Mamdani and Shaun Scott and dozens of other high-profile, successful DSA electeds across the country?

In addition to the harm it would cause our electoral program, R20 makes no distinction between the rank-and-file of the labor movement and the union bureaucracy. DSA members are not neutral in the labor movement. We are always on the side of democracy, power for union members within their unions, and class struggle on and off the shop floor. The labor movement is no stranger to careerists who use staff positions to jump into elected office, and union Political Action Committees that have poured money for decades into anemic Democratic Party candidates in exchange for nothing. Our strategy for running labor candidates needs to align with the rank-and-file movement, not the bureaucracy.

The unamended resolution also encourages chapters to “consider developing joint SIO projects with closely allied unions.” Socialists in Office Committees, or SIOs, are the means through which chapters communicate with endorsed electeds and support their cohesion as a socialist bloc against the status quo pressures to compromise. While SIOs are [far from perfect](#), an effective SIO committee makes the difference between collapsing into business-as-usual irrelevance and [building an effective socialist caucus](#). By contrast, unions are politically divided, with members falling on all sides of the socialist, liberal, and reactionary spectrum. While we can work to bring the majority of union members over to socialist politics and to win union endorsements, “joint SIO projects” with unions are a recipe for spoiling DSA’s cohesive political strategy.

Lastly, R20 undermines one of the strongest sections of the [National Electoral Commission Consensus Resolution](#): “Focused National Endorsements,” which stipulates that national endorsements should be given to open socialists with deep relationships to DSA. This is what allows us to create a unified slate that DSA can fight for nationally and ends the practice of paper endorsements. By siloing labor candidates into a separate slate, R20 does them a disservice, pushing them out of our unified electoral project and limiting their access to crucial organizational resources.

For the sake of uplifting openly socialist union members, rooting our electoral interventions in the rank-and-file of the labor movement, and protecting the strength and independence of our

electoral program, we urge delegates to vote no on R20 unless amended by *R20-A1: Democratic Socialists and the Labor Movement Need Each Other*.

Tab 2

