

Candidate conducts virtual campaign

Summertown, TN -- Presidential hopeful Stephen Gaskin is conducting an active, but atypical campaign for the Green Party nomination. He's not flying around the country, doing television debates, or running campaign ads. Instead, he's propped up on his king-sized bed in his wooded Tennessee home, conducting a massive email campaign on what he calls the "hippie gossip circuit."

"I have been crisscrossing this continent for 28 years," says the 64 year-old candidate. "My books have sold about half a million, and books related to my work have sold several millions. We have been building a system for years. On my road trips, I usually talk on the local public access station and I have friends from coast to coast on that circuit."

Gaskin's strategy is dictated part by philosophy and partly by necessity.

"Of course we don't have the funds to put on the kind of show that the Republicrats put on, so my presidential candidacy will not even try to compete financially. That would be the first trap."

Instead, Gaskin has taken the very practical approach of using the internet to contact friends and supporters across the country. He has a webpage, www.stephen2000.org, set up and maintained for him by his niece in California, with several more in the making. He's already received numerous messages of support from total strangers, in addition to the old friends and former "Farmies" who know him from the community he founded 28 years ago.

"I get about 60 or so emails a day from people wanting to know how they can get involved, people who've been arrested or whose children have been put out of school, people with all kinds of stories."

Gaskin's campaign message includes all the points in the Green Party platform, with an emphasis on decriminalizing marijuana possession and granting amnesty to the half million hippies and others imprisoned for simple possession.

"When the crime is so minor, having marijuana, and the punishment is so unreasonable, taking people's homes and years of their lives as well as a very real twentieth century shunning, one is forced to look for deeper motives," says Gaskin.

"There have been a whole series of decisions made, on local, state and federal levels to the effect that hippies, by which is meant any committed liberal persons, are undesirable and are to be banned, interdicted, harassed, discouraged, arrested and pee tested. It is a blatant use of police power to frighten and intimidate millions of people into giving up a heartfelt spiritual practice and lifestyle."

Gaskin intends to bring this subject out into the open, and get it into the presidential debate.

"I think Perot's 18 million, or whatever it was, is about half as many as there are hippies in the United States. I want to demonstrate that our constituency is large and intelligent and worthy of consideration."

Gaskin is gaining support from several sectors--animal rights and vegetarian groups, hemp supporters, marijuana supporters, and of course, students. He's keeping in touch with all of them by email, and hoping his virtual campaign will ultimately lead to real success.

Contact the Gaskin campaign at Gaskin2000@hotmail.com