

For a united movement of Detroit workers! Form rank-and-file committees to oppose concessions!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party

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Detroit city workers opposed to Mayor David Bing's demands for layoffs and furloughs require a new strategy.

No sooner was the primary election over than Bing stepped up his attack on city workers. The city is planning 500 layoffs this month, on top of the hundreds already implemented since May. The mayor wants the city's 13,000 employees to accept pay cuts of 10 to 20 percent through furloughs and workweek reductions.

"There are going to be layoffs regardless" of the outcome of negotiations, said Bing last week. "At a minimum of 1,000 layoffs," he added. The City Council has already adopted a measure that would reduce nonunion workers' pay by 10 percent. Last week, Bing said that the city would be put into receivership if city workers did not agree to wage cuts by August 28.

The demands of this multimillionaire businessman for "sacrifice" from workers should be rejected with contempt.

Bing has no popular mandate to carry out this policy. Last month's primary elections were a mockery of democracy. Only 15 percent of the population voted, a sign of the mass disaffection of Detroit's population with the entire political structure.

Even as Bing demands punishing cuts from workers, the Detroit Free Press reported Tuesday that the mayor is paying all of his top appointees at least \$10,000 more than the previous mayor.

The reduction of city workers' benefits is part of an attack on the entire Detroit working class.

Robert Bobb, the Detroit Public School system's emergency financial manager, appointed by Michigan's Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm, has closed nearly 30 schools and scheduled 2,500 layoffs. Dozens of auto plants have been shut down and thousands of jobs lost as a result of the

restructuring of the auto industry carried out by President Barack Obama.

Detroit as a whole is in a state of economic depression, with official unemployment over 25 percent and over a third of the population in poverty. Vast sections of the population face the threat of job losses and wage cuts, home foreclosures and utility shutoffs. Conditions of life for thousands of people are simply intolerable.

Opposition to these conditions has not and will not come from the so-called trade unions, including AFSCME. These organizations are no more capable of carrying out a fight now than they were against previous concession demands. AFSCME and the rest of the city unions urged workers to vote for Bing; the present attack on workers is the direct result.

The unions are perfectly willing to grant concessions to Bing and the city administration. "We'd be willing to cut back our hours [i.e., accept wage cuts] if we are promised there won't be layoffs," Joe Valenti, president of Teamsters Local 214, which represents city garbage truck drivers, told the Detroit News.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for strikes and demonstrations in response to Bing's demands, including preparations for a general strike throughout the Detroit area.

City workers should form rank-and-file and neighborhood committees to defend their living standards, completely independent of AFSCME and the other trade unions. These committees should be democratically elected and controlled by the workers themselves. An appeal should be made for united struggle of teachers, auto workers and all sections of the working class in the city, employed and unemployed. A determined stand by city workers will win mass support throughout the Detroit area.

However, the struggle of city workers is above all a political fight. It must be directed against Bing,

Granolm, and the entire political establishment that is forcing through these cuts. The success of this struggle therefore depends on the development of an independent political movement of the working class—throughout Detroit, the United States, and internationally.

The Democratic Party, no less than the Republican Party, speaks for the large banks and corporations.

The Obama administration has handed over literally trillions of dollars to the major banks in the form of cheap loans and guarantees. As a consequence, the major Wall Street firms are anticipating record profits this year, with their top executives preparing for record bonuses. The very people who created a crisis that has thrown millions of people to the brink of ruin are now doing better than ever!

Who will pay for these bonuses and bailouts? On this, the political establishment is universally agreed: the working class. The White House has explicitly rejected calls to offer federal assistance to states and municipalities. States facing budget crises, including New York and California, have been told that they must sharply reduce social services because no federal money is available.

The budget deficit of Detroit—\$300 million—is a pittance compared to the bank bailouts. There are not a few individuals among the financial and corporate elite who could cover this deficit with a personal check.

These conditions are not confined to the United States. In Canada, city workers in Windsor and Toronto have been forced to accept concessions. In every country, the economic crisis is being used as an opportunity to roll back wages and living conditions for the working class.

Workers must reject the entire economic framework defended by the big business politicians, the union executives, and the mass media. They must reject a society in which the livelihoods of the vast majority of the population are sacrificed to the unquenchable profit demands of a tiny minority.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for a socialist program, including:

- A multi-billion dollar public works program to rebuild Detroit and provide quality jobs for everyone. Similar programs must be established throughout the country.
- The redistribution of wealth from the financial oligarchy that created the economic crisis. The multi-million dollar bonuses to bank executives must be confiscated and redirected to meet pressing social needs.
- The nationalization of the major banks and large corporations, which should be run as democratically-controlled and publicly-owned utilities. There can be no solution to the social crisis that does not attack the economic basis of power of the financial and corporate elite.

In the mayoral elections, the SEP ran its own candidate, D'Artagnan Collier, a Detroit Water & Sewerage worker and member of AFSCME Local 207. However, our campaign is by no means over following the primary elections. The aim of the SEP is to unify workers in the United States and internationally in the common struggle for socialism—that is, for equality and the rational and democratic utilization of the wealth of the planet.

We urge all workers who are looking for a way to oppose the attack on their living conditions to contact us today.

To contact the Socialist Equality Party, visit **www.wsws.org**

or write to **sep@socialistequality.com**

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