

Support D'Artagnan Collier, Socialist Equality Party candidate for Detroit mayor

17 April 2009

The Socialist Equality Party (US) announces today that it is running D'Artagnan Collier as its candidate for mayor of Detroit, Michigan in the August 4th primary elections. Collier is currently collecting signatures, due May 12, to get on the ballot. To participate or find out more about the campaign, click here.

Collier, 40, is a city worker and a lifelong resident of Detroit. He joined the Workers League, the predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party, in 1984, when he was 16, and has spent his entire adult life as a leading member of the socialist movement fighting in the interests of the working class. The following is his statement announcing the campaign.

As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Mayor in Detroit, I urge all workers and youth to support our campaign and help put my name on the ballot for the August elections.

This election is taking place as the world economy enters the deepest economic crises since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Global unemployment is soaring. In the US, over 600,000 jobs are being eliminated every month.

This crisis did not arise out of nowhere! It is the product of a decades-long policy of the capitalist class. The American financial aristocracy has dismantled industry, attacking jobs and wages, while amassing vast fortunes through manic speculation. Now that these bubbles have collapsed, this same ruling elite is seeking to bail itself out using public funds, forcing workers to pay.

Workers were sold a bill of goods with the Obama campaign, which appealed to oppositional sentiment and the desire for "change." As faithful servants of the financial elite, however, the Democratic Party and the Obama administration are now leading the campaign for bank bailouts, wage cuts and war. Speaking on behalf of Wall Street, Obama is demanding that workers at Chrysler and General Motors accept a new round of massive wage

and job cuts in order to make the companies profitable for investors and billionaire hedge fund managers.

The working class must intervene to impose its own solution to the crisis. The program of the SEP includes:

- **Rebuild Detroit! Billions for jobs and public works!** The decades-long attack on the working class has devastated Detroit and the state of Michigan. Detroit is now the country's poorest large city. Official unemployment stands at 22 percent, after decades of job cuts in auto and other manufacturing. The city is bankrupt, and Democratic Mayor Kenneth Cockrel Jr. is planning to wipe out the jobs of 1,000 city workers and impose a 10 percent pay cut, while the school board closes another 53 schools. Over the last year, Michigan, which has the highest unemployment rate in the nation, has lost 250,000 jobs.

I call for a massive public works program to rebuild the city, providing jobs to all who need them. Billions must be spent to build factories, hospitals, schools, and a new mass transit system to serve the whole region.

- **Stop all home foreclosures! No utility shutoffs!** Neither the Democratic nor Republican parties offer any solution to the housing crisis. The SEP calls for an immediate end to foreclosures and the lowering of the principal on home mortgages for all working people. At the same time, no worker should be forced to go without heat, electricity or water, or use unsafe methods because they cannot afford to pay their bills. I call for an immediate end to all utility shutoffs. The greed of the electrical companies has already led to too many tragic and unnecessary deaths.

- **No to Wall Street bailouts! Reject the blackmail of GM and Chrysler workers! Defend the jobs and wages of all autoworkers!** The Washington politicians and their media accomplices claim there is no money for social programs, even as they hand out trillions to the banks and hedge funds. These bank bailouts come with no strings attached, while autoworkers are forced to accept more

concessions and job cuts. The SEP calls on workers throughout Detroit and across the country to initiate a mass campaign in defense of the jobs and wages of all workers.

- **For social equality and the redistribution of wealth!** The wealth of those who have made billions through financial speculation must be recovered to meet pressing social needs. Where fraud and criminality are involved, those responsible must be prosecuted.

- **Transform the banks and giant corporations into public utilities!** These institutions, run on the basis of profit, have destroyed the economy while funneling billions into the hands of the wealthy. They should be placed under the democratic control of the working class. Workers must take control of the auto and other industrial companies and run them in the interests of social need, not private profit.

- **For socialism and the political independence of the working class! Break with the Democratic and Republican parties!** Many workers looked to the Obama administration as a source of change. However, three months into office, Obama has already demonstrated his complete subservience to the financial elite. The new administration is continuing Bush's bank bailouts, and Obama has launched a war on auto workers, placing the full power of the state behind the demand for concessions. At the same time, the war in Iraq continues and Obama has initiated an escalation of military violence against Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In Detroit, Democrats have employed racial politics for decades to divide workers and prevent a movement against the capitalist system. What has been the outcome? The enrichment of a tiny black elite as the social conditions facing the majority of black workers has declined drastically. At the same time workers in the suburbs are facing a skyrocketing number of home foreclosures and are losing their jobs in the auto industry. The experience of Detroit exposes the bankruptcy of racial politics and the necessity for a struggle to unite black, white, Hispanic and immigrant workers in common struggle.

If the working class is to fight for its interests, it must break resolutely with the trade unions, including the United Auto Workers, which is headquartered in Detroit. These organizations—trade unions in name only—have for decades collaborated with the corporations in the destruction of jobs and wages. Their alliance with the Democrats and defense of the capitalist system has produced a disaster for auto workers and the working

class as a whole. The SEP calls for the formation of independent rank-and-file committees to carry forward the struggle.

The economic crisis has exposed not only the failure of a set of policies, but of an entire economic and social system—the capitalist system, based on private ownership of the productive forces and the profit motive.

There can be no solution to the crisis facing Detroit without the political mobilization of the working class on a national and international level against the capitalist system. Capitalism is a global system and it is in the midst of a global crisis. Workers must unify internationally in struggle for their common interests.

The alternative to capitalism is socialism, the democratic control of the productive forces in the interests of social need. If the working class is to advance its own solution, it must build its own political party based on a socialist perspective.

My campaign is not simply aimed at gathering votes but giving a conscious political expression to the growing social anger felt by millions of working people towards the social inequality produced by the capitalist system and the politicians who speak, not for them, but for the wealthy and powerful.

No one will defend the working class but the workers themselves. I encourage every form of mass resistance to plant closings, layoffs, school shutdowns and home foreclosures. The traditions of class struggle should be revived, including strikes, plant occupations and mass demonstrations. This struggle, however, must be driven by a new political outlook and goal: the building of a new political party of the working class, which has as its aim the establishment of workers' government and the socialist reorganization of the world economy to meet human needs, not profit.

Join the fight for socialism! Support the Socialist Equality Party campaign!

Click here to find out more about the Socialist Equality Party or support the campaign for Detroit mayor.



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