

For the unity of Canadian and American workers

Statement of D'Artagnan Collier, SEP candidate for Detroit mayor
26 May 2009

D'Artagnan Collier distributed this statement to striking city workers in Windsor, Ontario.

As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for mayor of Detroit and a city worker myself, I want to express my solidarity and support for your struggle here in Windsor. Workers on both sides of the border are facing a concerted attack on our jobs, wages and benefits—and we must stand together in a common fight.

The names of the political parties might be different—in the US, it is the Democrats and Republicans, in Canada, the Conservatives, Liberals and New Democratic Party—but the story is the same. They all claim there is “no money” to pay living wages and benefits to workers or to fund vitally needed social programs. Yet, these very same politicians have found unlimited resources to bail out the Wall Street and Bay Street bankers and fund the criminal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In Detroit, the newly elected mayor, wealthy businessman David Bing, is determined to sell off public assets, privatize services and end what he calls the “entitlement mentality” of city workers. Earlier this week, the “emergency financial manager” of the Detroit schools announced 900 layoffs, just weeks after outlining plans to close 50 schools over the next two years.

Far from representing a “change,” the Obama administration has spearheaded the attack on the working class. While guaranteeing the fortunes of the financial speculators responsible for the worst

economic crisis since the Great Depression, the Democratic president is demanding that auto workers accept poverty-level wages and sweatshop conditions, in order to make the auto industry profitable for Wall Street.

In Canada, the government and the employers are exploiting the economic crisis to rollback the living standards of auto workers and other workers. In Windsor, you are engaged in a bitter six-week strike against demands for a wage freeze, the gutting of pension benefits and the establishment of a two-tier system for new hires.

In the early struggles against the auto corporations, workers on both sides of the Detroit River joined in a common struggle. In the 1980s, however, the United Auto Workers broke up into two nationally based organizations, with each committed to defend the profits of their “own” bosses by voluntarily lowering labor costs. On this basis, the UAW and CAW pit US and Canadian workers against each other—with devastating consequences.

It is time for workers to reject all forms of economic nationalism. As the global scope of the economic crisis makes clear, the entire world economy is more closely linked together than ever before—making it all the more imperative that workers bind together in united struggle to defend jobs and living standards.

In both countries, this means rejecting the bankruptcy politics of the unions, which tie workers to the capitalist system and the bought-and-paid-for big business parties, including the New Democratic Party. I am running in the elections to champion the building of

a new mass political party of the working class, the Socialist Equality Party, to fight for the reorganization of economic and political life to meet the needs of working people, not the financial elite. The working class is not responsible for the breakdown of the capitalist system and must not be made to pay for it. I call for the nationalization of the banks and large industries under the democratic control of the working class. On this basis, the vast wealth created by workers can be used to end social inequality and guarantee a decent paying job, health care, housing and education for all.

I urge you to read our web site, the *World Socialist Web Site*, and help build our sister party here in Canada.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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