SEP candidate speaks at Detroit meeting

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D'Artagnan Collier, Socialist Equality Party candidate for Detroit Mayor, spoke at a meeting in Downtown Detroit Tuesday. He addressed the pressing social questions facing workers in the city and explained his reasons for running.

"The Obama Administration has given its response to the economic crisis. The bourgeoisie, they have a strategy in which they are using this crisis to impose attacks on the working class, essentially returning conditions of life to what it was prior to the Great Depression..."

"The working class has to take its stand in opposition to this program. Detroit is the center of the worldwide attack on the working class. It is here that the American ruling class is attempting to impose benchmark concessions onto all workers, and here that the working class must present its response."

Joe Kishore, SEP national secretary, gave introductory remarks. He presented an overview of the conditions facing the working class in the city and how it relates to the struggles of the workers in the US and internationally. He stressed the parallel between Detroit and California, where the budget crisis is being used by the state and federal government as an opportunity to massively cut social spending. "California, like Detroit, is going to set the precedent for the conditions facing workers throughout the country and all over the world."

Collier explained the necessity for an independent political movement of the working class, based on a socialist perspective.

Teachers, bus drivers, students and other city workers attended the meeting. Participants expressed agreement with Collier's analysis of the UAW and the Democratic Party, as well his call for an independent political movement of the working class.

The meeting took place the same day as a rally called by some 50 'left' organizations in front of the Detroit Renaissance Center. The 'tent city' rally presented a number of speakers, mainly various UAW local officials, all of whom sought to subordinate the enormous opposition existing to the present social order behind the Obama administration and the UAW.

Collier explained the difference between the outlook of those organizations and that of the SEP. "The perspective of the SEP is to break with the Unions, to break with the Democratic Party, to break with Obama. This makes us different from every single other oppositional organization in existence. We are seeking, on an international basis, to unite with the whole of the working class in a common struggle against the organizations that are directly hostile to its interests."

Ms. Peterson, a Detroit worker who attended an SEP meeting for the first time, said she was impressed with the meeting and asked a number of questions afterwards.

"So do we have to start the fight here, America first, or is it a worldwide question?" Peterson asked. Collier answered: "Our entire outlook and strategy is international; the strength of the working class is in its worldwide solidarity." After thinking about the matter, she replied: "So that makes your group different from anything else I've ever heard."

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