

Oppose all utility shutoffs! Heat and Light are a social right! Join CAUS Today!

Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS)
14 November 2011

The Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS) demands an immediate end to all utility shutoffs and the transformation of the utility companies into publicly owned enterprises that are democratically run to meet social needs. With the winter season approaching, utility shutoffs will again claim the lives of innocent people and cause widespread suffering. This must be stopped.

DTE's "Energy Customer Assistance Day" has nothing to do with genuinely helping residents keep their gas and lights on. It is a public relations stunt by the company, supported by Mayor Dave Bing's administration. It is intended to give the appearance of generosity, even as the utility giant continues terminate service to households everywhere, while paying multi-million dollar salaries to its executives and generating massive profits for Wall Street investors.

On September 30, DTE announced that so far this year it has made \$561 million in pre-tax profits. At the same time, in the first eight months of this year, DTE and Consumers Energy have collectively shut off 260,000 households in Michigan.

These numbers are steadily growing as poverty dramatically increases. It is well known that such shutoffs lead to deaths. In 2010, more than a dozen Detroit area residents died in house fires caused by losing their utility service.

This crisis is not specific to just Detroit or Michigan. Nationally, 4.3 million households had their utilities shut off in 2009, a number that has been steadily increasing.

Since 2008 when the Great Recession began, record numbers of households have applied for government help through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). According to the National Energy

Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), the number of households served by LIHEAP has increased from 5.8 million in 2008 to a projected 8.9 million in 2011—a fifty percent jump since 2008.

The Obama administration is recommending, under these conditions, that funding for the LIHEAP program be cut in half! The projected loss of resources is already resulting in tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of families being put on waiting lists for aid, as states work to tighten eligibility guidelines and cut grant amounts.

Michigan's Democratic Party is closely allied to the utility industry. Detroit Mayor David Bing was a member of the DTE Board of Directors for 20 years. His proposal to "right-size" Detroit by eliminating city services, such as public street lighting, schooling, and garbage collection, is a plan devised by big business—with DTE playing a major role—in the interest of profit-making, not Detroiters.

At the end of October, most of the City of Highland Park was plunged into darkness when the Democratic Party mayor allowed DTE to remove street lights because the city could not pay its bills.

Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, the Michigan Public Services Commission, which supposedly regulates the utility industry, has consistently approved rate hikes to ensure that the corporations make even more money.

Why should so many people suffer so much to generate profits for so few? Millions live without power, cities are going dark and the Democrats and Republicans join hands to cut needed social services while bailing out banks and corporations.

The Committee Against Utility Shutoffs was founded to mobilize working people in opposition to DTE, the utility giants and their backers, the Democrats and

Republicans. We call on you to join and fight with us.
We stand for:

*An end to all utility shutoffs! Restore service to all those cut off from gas and electricity!

*Turn DTE and other utility companies into public enterprises, run democratically for social need, not private profit!

*Hold DTE and its executives legally responsible for the deaths caused by utility shutoffs!

*Establish a multi-billion-dollar public works program to put residents back to work and rebuild Detroit!

*Build an independent working class movement! No support to the Democrats and Republicans, the bought-and-paid-for representatives of the corporations!



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