

Socialist Equality Party campaigns in Detroit

A reporting team
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Supporters of Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White campaigned in Detroit's Eastern Market Saturday, wrapping up three weeks of promotion for a public meeting Monday at Wayne State University.

The Socialist Equality Party members and supporters encountered mass anger over cuts to social services and widespread disaffection with the Obama administration and the Democratic Party.

Saturday's campaign took place 10 days after the Detroit City Council and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder announced a "consent agreement" that will give city and state officials dictatorial powers to rip up labor contracts and impose drastic cuts in social programs.

"We've already given up two rounds of concessions, and the union wants to give up even more," said one Detroit city worker who asked not to be quoted by name for fear of losing his job. "If you add up wage cuts and cuts in other benefits such as medical, city workers have given up 40 percent of our compensation," he added.

On the same day of the campaign, Occupy Detroit held a general assembly at the market. The trade unions are moving to co-opt the remnants of the Occupy Wall Street movement behind the Obama administration.

Bob King, the head of the United Auto Workers, an organization that has lowered the compensation of autoworkers by a third in recent years, is heading up a campaign called 99% Spring. The aim is to bring opposition under the direct control of trade union and Democratic Party functionaries.

The organization held a "nonviolent resistance" training seminar Sunday at UAW Local 600, where King once served as president.

"The unions and Jobs with Justice have started bringing in people to get paid to get arrested," said Josh Achatz, who has been a participant at Occupy Detroit

since its inception. "I don't see how that's right."

"The fact that we were out of the control of the Democrats and their supporters made a lot of people uncomfortable," said Josh. "It seems like they're trying to get us back under control."

"I'd never vote for a Democrat or a Republican. They want to perpetuate the current system, where a small fraction of society profit off the poverty of everyone else."

White, who just got back from a tour of Florida and California, said he was looking forward to speaking at Wayne State. "There is so much politics at this university. We're going to be waging a direct campaign against identity politics, against postmodernism, and for Marxism."

In his talk, White will address the issue of racial politics and the killing of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida. The killing of Martin has sparked mass outrage among Detroit workers, and thousands participated in a protest last month against his shooting. White has denounced those who have sought to use the killing of Martin to rejuvenate racial politics and such discredited figures as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

"Racial politics is nothing more than a defense of the interests of the ruling class," White said Sunday. "Just look at Detroit: the entire city council is black, and they are totally committed to impoverishing the population and cutting social services."

The meeting will follow weeks of campaigning by members of the International Students for Social Equality, the student movement of the SEP, at Wayne State University. Members of the ISSE explained the basic questions of socialism, and the necessity of building an independent movement of the working class.

"Politics has become nothing but a redundant soap opera," said Jacob Martin, a math and computer science

major at Wayne State University, who said he plans to attend the meeting. “It’s hard just to keep track of what way the government is trying to take away our rights on any given day.”

“The ISSE is really starting to get a footing at Wayne State,” said Andre Damon, the National Secretary of the ISSE. “This city has been devastated by capitalism and we’re fighting to give it an alternative.”



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