

Oppose the strikebreaking injunction! Defend the Detroit water and sewerage workers!

Socialist Equality Party
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Detroit Water and Sewerage Department workers, who walked out Sunday morning, need the support of every section of the working class in the Detroit area to fight the strikebreaking order imposed on Monday by Federal Judge Sean Cox.

Prior to the strike, Cox, a Republican appointed to the federal bench by George W. Bush, stripped DWSD workers of seniority rights and workplace protections and sharply expanded outsourcing and subcontracting. He is now threatening workers with fines, arrests, suspensions and firings because they have taken a stand against Mayor David Bing's privatization plans and attacks on jobs and living standards.

This is an attack not only on striking workers, but also on teachers, firefighters, auto workers and all other workers and youth who dare to oppose the anti-working class agenda of the two big business parties.

Like President Reagan, who fired the PATCO air traffic controllers in 1981, Judge Cox and Mayor Bing are threatening to make an example of DWSD workers to intimidate the entire working class. Speaking of cuts that could slash the DWSD work force by 82 percent, plus a 10 percent reduction in pay and cuts in pensions and health benefits, Bing declared that these were "the type of cost saving measures that are essential to moving our city forward to long-term financial stability."

In ordering workers back to work, the judge said the walkout "will harm the safety of the public." Bing praised the ruling, saying, "It is imperative that there be no interruption in the service or an impact on the quality of water provided to our citizens..."

What hypocrisy! Neither Cox nor the mayor could care less about public safety and health! If they did, they would not be seeking to decimate the already undermanned workforce at the water department and

outsource operations to well-connected private firms whose only concern is making a profit.

Bing, a Democrat, a multi-millionaire, and a former board member of DTE Energy, already enforces the cut-off of water and electricity to tens of thousands of Detroit-area citizens too poor to pay their bills. Under his plan to "right-size" Detroit, he has ordered the shut-off of lighting, sewerage service, public education and other essential services to force residents to move out of neighborhoods targeted for depopulation—and eventual development by political cronies seeking to make a fast buck.

Behind Bing stands the Obama administration, which is no less dedicated than Governor Rick Snyder and his fellow Republicans in Washington to slashing billions more from social programs. The gutting of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps and home heating assistance will lead to the premature deaths of tens of thousands of people. So much for their professed concerns about the health and safety of the public!

Form Workers Support Committees to expand the struggle!

The water and sewerage workers have taken a stand for the whole working class. But they cannot fight this battle alone. The strikebreaking threat must be answered with the expansion of the walkout to all city workers—firefighters, teachers, sanitation workers, DOT drivers and mechanics—who are facing the same attacks.

The SEP calls for the formation of Workers Support Committees in the factories and workplaces. Delegations of workers should be sent to the picket lines to discuss with water and sewerage workers the issues in the strike and plan a united strategy to fight the attacks on all sections of workers and youth.

These committees should be organized independently

of the unions, which are doing nothing to mobilize support for the striking workers and are hostile to their struggle. The United Auto Workers, which represents lower-level managers at the Water and Sewerage Treatment plant, is assisting the city in its efforts to defeat the strike by ordering its members to cross the picket lines of their fellow workers.

The striking workers cannot leave the conduct of their struggle in the hands of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). The perspective of the union is not to broaden the fight, but to isolate it so as to maintain the union bureaucracy's alliance with the Democratic Party. AFSCME Council 25 is insisting that the strike be ended and workers simply follow the dictates of the court.

In a leaflet passed out by AFSCME Local 207, the union seeks to spread illusions that Bing can be pressured by a limited strike to back down. Because this is an election year, the union declares, the Democratic Party "can't have a Democratic politician like Bing openly busting a union which is only trying to defend our modest living standards."

This is rubbish! Bing has already made clear his subservience to the banks and corporations by imposing on Detroit a bankers' dictatorship, in the form of a "consent agreement" with the state to implement emergency measures, just as Obama has done the bidding of big business by slashing auto workers' wages and bailing out Wall Street.

In line with its effort to isolate the strike, divide Detroit-area workers and keep the working class tied to the Democratic Party, AFSCME is promoting identity politics, claiming that the fundamental issue in the strike is race. As one worker on the picket line said, "We made that mistake with Obama. We thought he would be for black workers. But it's not about race, it's about class."

Politically tied to the Democratic Party and committed to the reelection of Obama, the unions offer no way forward. They accept the framework of the capitalist system and agree that the working class must pay for an economic crisis it did not create.

The Socialist Equality Party urges water and sewerage workers to form a rank-and-file committee independent of the union apparatus to take control of the conduct of the strike, beginning with an appeal for support from the entire working class of the Detroit

metropolitan area.

The city is moving quickly to shut down the strike because it fears it will develop into a broader struggle against the Bing administration and the anti-working class agenda of the entire corporate and financial elite. But this is precisely what is necessary!

Broaden the struggle! Break the isolation imposed by the unions! Full support to the Detroit water and sewerage workers!



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