

Detroit teachers and city workers:

Reject the concessions contracts! Mobilize against financial dictatorship in Detroit!

The Socialist Equality Party
22 March 2013

The following statement is being distributed to workers at the Water and Sewerage Department voting today, and teachers voting today and Monday, on new contract proposals.

The Socialist Equality Party urges teachers and city workers to reject the agreements reached with the city by the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

The unions are seeking to ram through these deals in advance of Michigan's "right to work" law, which will go into effect on March 28. The transparent aim is to secure the continued flow of union dues for union executives, while enforcing huge concessions on the workers the unions claim to represent.

The unions are working hand-in-hand with the city management and the incoming emergency manager. Whatever their differences in tactics, they have a common aim: to force workers to pay for the economic crisis of Detroit. If the contracts are accepted, workers will be stripped of jobs, wages, pensions and basic democratic rights.

The rejection of this blackmail must be the start of a counter-offensive by the working class throughout the metro Detroit area against the dictatorship of the banks through the installation of Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, whose task is to sell off public assets, gut essential services and destroy the jobs and livelihoods of the working class.

The coordinated attack on teachers and water and sewerage workers makes clear what is being planned for every section of workers.

Teachers have already lost tens of thousands of dollars under the Termination Incentive Plan agreed to

by the DFT. Now they are being told to accept a continued wage freeze with worthless promises of "bonuses" contingent on an "improvement in the District's financial condition." This in a city on the verge of bankruptcy! The three-year deal provides a green light for the continued attack on public education and the expansion of for-profit charters.

AFSCME is demanding water and sewerage workers accept a six-year deal, which will impose a pay freeze for the life of the contract, schedule 10-12 hour shifts, facilitate the firing of workers and impose higher worker contributions for health care and pension benefits. There is not the slightest job protection for workers facing the threat of privatization and outsourcing of 81 percent of their jobs.

In his summary of the contract DFT President Keith Johnson admitted, "Our critics say this is a terrible deal, and they are correct. It is." Then why are the unions bringing these slave charters back to workers?

It is because the unions do not speak for the working class. The high paid executives who run them, like Johnson and AFSCME President Al Garrett, are servants of big business and the Democratic Party. They all agree that working class must be impoverished in order to channel every available penny into the pockets of the wealthy bondholders who hold the city's debt.

The leaders of AFSCME Local 207 are cynically posing as opponents of the contract supported by the city union. However, they offer no alternative. The local is telling workers to place their faith in the federal courts, rejecting any effort to mobilize workers in a struggle against the demands of the city.

Well aware of the deep opposition of workers to what

is being planned, Orr, a lifelong Democrat, has appealed for “consensual agreement” with the unions. By imposing these contracts, the unions are seeking to prove to Orr that the attack on the working class can be carried out more efficiently with the support of the unions.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on teachers and water and sewerage workers to form rank-and-file committees to immediately discuss and organize plans for a joint struggle. Contingents of workers should be sent to factories and workplaces throughout the Detroit Metro area, including to auto workers, transit workers, hospital workers and student youth.

The SEP calls for:

Reject all cuts! Repudiate the debt!

The claim that there is no money for wages and basic social services is a lie. Wall Street investors and the rich have sucked the city dry for years. This includes some \$474 million relating to the servicing of city debt since 2005, more than the entire deficit of \$237 million.

The SEP calls for the repudiation of all debt owed to the banks. Working people must not be made to pay for a crisis they did not create. To fully fund pensions, health care, education and other basic rights, we call for a massive redistribution of wealth, including the imposition of a 90 percent tax on all income over \$1 million.

Break with the two big business parties and the trade unions!

Mayor Bing, Governor Snyder, Orr and the Detroit City Council are all agreed on the need to make the working class pay. Like the unions, the city council has criticized the appointment of an emergency manager on the grounds that the council itself can more effectively impose sweeping cuts on the working class.

The same is true at a national level. After bailing out the banks, the Obama administration is conspiring with Republicans to slash trillions more from the key federal health care and retirement programs. While the Federal Reserve prints \$85 billion a month to hand out to Wall Street, nothing can supposedly be done to assist cash-strapped cities like Detroit.

Unite the working class! Oppose racial politics!

Detroit’s Democratic politicians have promoted the politics of race for decades to divide the working class. It is a matter of “Black Detroit” against “White Lansing,” we are told. The basic dividing line is not

race, but class. Black or white, male or female, immigrant or native born—workers everywhere face the same conditions.

The rights of the working class, not the profits of the banks!

Against the demands of the billionaires, the SEP advances a program in defense of basic social rights—the right to a job at a decent wage, the right to education, health care, housing, a secure retirement.

If capitalism cannot guarantee these rights—and by the admission of its own representatives, it cannot—a new social structure must be established. Society must be placed on entirely new foundations, in which production is organized on the basis of social need, not private profit. The giant banks and corporations must be placed under the democratic control of working people.

The Socialist Equality Party is organizing opposition, including assisting in the formation of action committees throughout the region. Contact us today to become involved. Now is the time to fight back!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact