

Detroit's emergency manager keeps mayor, city council on payroll

Bryan Dyne, Shannon Jones
30 March 2013

As his first official act, Detroit's emergency financial manager, Kevyn Orr, has restored the pay of the mayor and City Council. Their pay was eliminated under the new emergency manager law, Public Act 436, which went into effect Thursday. Only Orr had the power to restore their salaries.

Orr issued a statement explaining his action. "Detroiters need their elected representatives on the job and working collaboratively toward the solutions that will solve our immediate financial crisis and position the city to grow and thrive." He continued, "I wanted the first order issued to reaffirm how important the mayor and city council members are to Detroit's turnaround."

Mayor Bing makes around \$145,000. The Council president makes \$77,000, and the Council members make just over \$73,000.

The response of the Council members can be summed up in a statement by Council President Charles Pugh, who said, "Our position all along was that restoring democracy was in everyone's best interest."

Whose best interests? What Pugh calls "restoring democracy" is merely the restoration of his own paycheck. He is not interested at all in fighting against a virtual dictator undemocratically imposed over the city of Detroit.

The other members of City Council fell in line. Councilman Kenneth Cockrel Jr. said, "It's consistent with the approach [Orr] wants to take on how he moves forward with the mayor and Council."

Councilwoman Brenda Jones remarked that she felt that the vote of the populace had been ignored, but then followed up by saying, "He indicated that he wants to work with the Council, the mayor and the citizens. He gave a commitment that he will continue to communicate."

The commitment Orr gave is, in fact, only to ensure the comfort level the political officials who have overseen Detroit, whose only real opposition to Orr was that they wanted to enact the massive cuts being demanded by Detroit's creditors themselves, rather than have someone else reap the benefits of doing so. (See, "The Detroit City Council begs Snyder, "We can do this without an emergency manager"")

The WSWS interviewed a Chrysler Warren Truck worker with 16 years about the emergency manager.

"They have been trying to privatize the water department and think this is a way for them to get it. That's their biggest thing. They want to get hold of that water supply. With Orr, that is a way for them to worm in and get it. They are probably going to do it, whether we like it or not.

"As far as what is going on in Detroit, the street where I live used to be beautiful. Now, they cut all the trees down for one thing. All the houses are boarded up on the block next to me now. There is one house left. The others are boarded up.

"You have the mayor on one side and the city council on the other, going against each other. They are not down in the city. They need to go down in the city. Everything downtown is pretty much beautiful. But you go into the neighborhoods ... they need to start in the back and come towards the city. They need to help the neighborhoods. It is horrible.

"As far as Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, while they are there it creates a presence, they are still causing attention, that's a good thing."

The SEP explained that the role of Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton was to divert the anger of working people over the attacks being carried out on their jobs and living conditions into the dead end of racial politics. The fundamental issue, the SEP insisted, was class, not

race. As for Bing and the City Council, their disputes were largely tactical, concerning the most effective way of carrying out the cuts.

“It is survival of the fittest,” said the Chrysler worker. “That is what it sounds like to me. That’s what is going on at Chrysler. The 3-2-120 crap,” he said, referring to the 10-hour, four-day work schedule recently imposed with the support of the United Auto Workers. “If you are poor you are out. If you have got the money, you can stay. That’s what it looks like all over now. Certainly in Detroit it is going to be rich and poor. That is all there will be until we stand up. Nobody is going to do that for us.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact