

Detroit mayoral candidate D'Artagnan Collier campaigns at Eastern Market

Thomas Gaist
20 May 2013

D'Artagnan Collier, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Detroit mayor, campaigned on Saturday at Eastern Market. Campaigners distributed Collier's statement, "Workers must reject Emergency Manager's plan for Detroit."

Collier spoke with workers and youth about the social conditions in Detroit and the political situation more broadly. Issues raised included the imposition of a de facto dictatorship in the form of Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, the downward pressure on wages, attacks on democratic rights, the destruction of pensions and other social benefits, and the rising cost of living.

Collier explained that these different aspects of the crisis were part of a class war being waged against workers by the ruling class, with the support of both the Democrats and Republicans. Sally, a long-time Detroit resident, commented, "I'm glad to finally see a candidate from a real working class background." When asked about utility shutoffs in Detroit, she said, "Somebody needs to oppose them. A lot of kids have died as a result. Somebody needs to stop it."

Referring to the city's political leadership, Raymond said, "It's always the same people, the same old people. The people need to mobilize together."

Nick Smith, an artist who lives near Eastern Market, told the team that he reads the WSWWS regularly. He referred to a recent article about moving the homeless to the outskirts of the city, a policy which he described as "deeply immoral." He spoke about the "mistreatment of the elderly" resulting from recent mass evictions, which aim to clear space for billionaire developers.

Smith praised the work of the WSWWS, commenting, "It's just a couple corporations that own the rest of the media. Everything is a cop show, glorifying authority figures. Nothing shows the struggles of ordinary

people."

Joan Belle, a retired worker who spent decades working in military production, said, "Things are wrong and going downhill. I retired in 1996, and I am poorer now than ever. I've had to cut back on things that make me happy. My nephews, who are in their late 20s, cannot find jobs, so they have to live with us and are dependent on us to feed them."

Asked about the claim that "there is no money" for basic services, let alone a public works program, Belle commented, "They can always find the money when they want to. CEOs are still getting bonuses, while we are out here suffering. The state is cutting our retirement funds and our basic protections."

The WSWWS team spoke with Pat and Ellen Kelley, a couple who said they have spent the past decades moving around the country in search of work. Pat said, "I am a worker and have been a dues-paying union member for decades. I hate the way the union behaves now. I'm very angry about the passage of the 'right to work' law, which was done through the back door. Our country is in very big trouble. We are finished, unless there is a major change."

Pat continued, "Trickle down doesn't work. The employers are laying people off, and now they are threatening to raise our contributions to the pension funds."

Asked about the Obama administration, Pat observed, "The Democrats have held the House, Senate, and the presidency at the same time, and yet done nothing."

Pat noted the political character of the unions, saying that they "purge militant workers from the ranks. To hold a position, you have to sign a statement swearing you are not a socialist or a communist."

Ellen, Pat's wife, said that the couple is "trying to put kids through college. It sucks. The cost of living goes

up, yet we don't see a raise in pay. We've been chasing one job after another for 25 years." Asked about the city council, she replied, "What do they know about our lives? The emergency manager is here to impose cuts on workers."

A younger couple, James and Celeste, talked about the "lockdown" in Boston, said, "Things are going in a bad direction. They are getting rid of our constitutional rights. We don't have an elected government anymore. It is scary." Referring to the situation in Detroit, they said, "This was a happening place. Now I look at it, and it's sad. Our water bill has doubled. We need protections against the rising cost of living."

Nellie Griffin spoke about the difficulty of finding any employment at all. "Even though I have a college degree, I can't find a job. It has been seven years since I was laid off. We need a government that will employ people. I have a felony from 25 years ago, when I was 17 years old. My ex-husband threatened my child, and I responded forcefully. Now, after spending \$50,000 on education, I still can't find a job. Paying for education was a waste of my money."



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact