

Pontiac residents describe social disaster left by emergency manager

Our reporters
17 June 2013

Pontiac, Michigan is a testing ground for Michigan's emergency manager law. What has happened in the devastated industrial city of 60,000 will happen to Detroit and all of the 21 municipalities under an emergency manager. Every city will face drastic cuts up to and including the virtual elimination of public services.

Louis Schimmel, a veteran of emergency management, has been the city's EM since 2011. He held the position in Ecorse in 1986 and in Pontiac in 2000. At the behest of the bankers and investors, Schimmel has reduced the city workforce by 92 percent, sold off the Silverdome sports arena and outsourced or privatized water and sewerage operations, emergency medical services, income tax collection and firefighting.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* recently spoke with Pontiac residents about what these cuts have meant for the working class in the city.

Anthony was asked if he saw an economic recovery in Pontiac. "No. It's getting worse here. I haven't seen any change about that. If there's a recovery, it isn't hitting Pontiac or Detroit... only where the rich people are.

"They're closing schools, the money isn't going nowhere. It's just lie after lie after lie. Like, if you get hurt, you're lucky if you get the ambulance. A guy I worked with died waiting on the ambulance. And if you go to a hospital, they don't have the equipment they're supposed to have."

"I worked for years and years and now I'm on food stamps," said Diane, a retiree. "The price of food has gone up three to four times, but food stamps haven't gone up. I can't get through the month. I go two to three days without eating. The school near my house was closed. How can that be when the lottery says

they're giving the money to the schools?

"How much money can a person have? I just want to live and go to the grocery store to get the food I want, not the food I'm forced to eat."



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