

D'Artagnan Collier holds rally at Detroit-area Chrysler plant

A WSWWS reporting team
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The Socialist Equality Party's candidate for mayor of Detroit, D'Artagnan Collier, held a campaign rally Friday afternoon at Chrysler's truck assembly plant in the northern Detroit suburb of Warren. More than 3,700 workers produce the Dodge Ram truck model at the factory.

Last March, Chrysler hired 1,000 new workers, most in their early twenties, when a third shift was added at the factory. The workers earn second-tier wages about half of what traditional workers are paid. The poverty-level wages are the result of the deal signed by the United Auto Workers during the 2009 auto industry bailout by the Obama administration.

The factory operates under the so-called Alternative Work Schedule. The AWS, also agreed to by the UAW, eliminates the eight-hour day won by auto workers in the 1940s. Instead, the workweek consists of four 10-hour days with no overtime payments, including for weekend work.

Over the past five weeks two workers have died at the Warren Truck and adjacent Warren stamping plants. On July 23, an electrician at the stamping plant collapsed and died on the day shift. On June 29, a 61-year-old worker on the 10-hour shift was found dead slumped over a worktable where he was doing "weld check" quality control.

Supporters of D'Artagnan Collier distributed more than 1,000 brochures, leaflets and notices calling on auto workers to unite with Detroit city workers and other sections of the working class to oppose the Detroit bankruptcy and the looting of city workers' pensions. The SEP candidate used a bullhorn to explain the necessity for a socialist alternative to the two big business parties and their assault on the working class.

Collier also urged workers to attend his last campaign meeting at Wayne State University this Sunday. Many

workers greeted the socialist candidate and engaged in a robust discussion, with several donating generously to his campaign.

Erika said, "The union is part of the company—it owns all these Chrysler stocks—how can it work for us?" Commenting on the emergency manager's plan to gut Detroit city workers' pensions, she said, "All they do is threaten workers. It happens in the city and it happens here."

Responding to media claims that workers' pensions were the cause of Detroit's bankruptcy, Paul said, "It's not the workers, it's the banks—they are fleecing everyone. Here they've cut wages and have this two-tier system."

An SEP supporter noted that Chrysler-Fiat boss Sergio Marchionne was threatening to shut plants in Italy and move more production to the US. "The workers in Europe have more vacation time, more personal time off for medical care than we do." With all the wage cuts in the US, he said, "We've become another Mexico now."

A young new-hire, Chrystal asked D'Artagnan Collier what his platform was. The SEP candidate explained that he was fighting for the working class to build its own political party in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans, in order to fight to "reorganize society for the working class." Collier explained how the emergency manager had been installed even after Michigan voters had struck down the first emergency manager law. "It's basically like a dictatorship," Chrystal said, noting that workers were being stripped of basic rights.

"It's unfair," her friend Chantel said. "The firefighters put in all that hard work, risk their lives, and now they are trying to take away the pensions they deserve. Also if they make workers work longer

because they don't have any pension, how are younger people going to get jobs and be able to fend for themselves and their families?"

Patrick, a worker with 17 years at Warren Truck, said he opposed the bankruptcy filing of Detroit. "I am totally against it," he said, adding, "They work all their lives and they want to take their pensions away from them. You should not be able to change things like that because of what management does."

"I can't vote in Detroit, but I like what I heard from D'Artagnan Collier. I will read his material carefully."

Deandre, another Warren Truck worker, said, "I don't like the UAW. They are corrupt. They have got stock in the company. They are not independent."

He spoke about the Alternative Work Schedule implemented at Warren Truck with the support of the UAW. "They make us work more in order to pay us less. There used to be five-six hours overtime guaranteed each week. They have cut our income down by about \$300-\$400 a week. Now workers are bringing home substantially less. How are they going to live?"

Zachery, a new hire, told Collier that he was opposed to the cuts in pensions. "It's like they want to work you until they die."

Clifton has worked at Warren Truck just six months. "I think what is happening in Detroit is a rip-off. It is unfair to parcel up the city like a corporation. A corporation is not a person. But the city is full of people."

"We need to start from the bottom up. Create more jobs for workers. It is a two-tier society. The people on the bottom have to rise. Unless we get together in a global people's union we have a long way to go. You can't talk local anymore."

"I liked what D'Artagnan had to say. It wasn't watered down or sugarcoated. It was direct and to the point."



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