

Workers World Party: The pseudo-left face of the Democratic Party

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Earlier this month, a two-day event took place in Detroit under the banner of the “International People’s Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity.” The meeting, which was attended by a little over 100 people, was organized by the Workers World Party to provide a platform for the Democratic Party.

One would be hard pressed to find a more distasteful combination of political scoundrels and charlatans than those who spoke at the October 5-6 event. They included Detroit City Councilwoman Joanne Watson and other local politicians who are complicit in the decades-long attacks led by the Democratic Party against the workers of Detroit.

Also speaking were various union bureaucrats—from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)—who have made their careers selling out the working class. This included former AFSCME Local 207 President John Riehl, a “left” union bureaucrat who was voted out of office after he betrayed the 2012 strike by Detroit Water and Sewerage workers.

The Workers World web site enthusiastically reported the demagogic statements of Wayne County Commissioner Martha G. Scott, who opened the event by declaring, “We’re calling on the banks to refund the money they stole from our community. Make the banks pay!”

The principal aim of the assembly was to bolster a party that is presiding, at both a local and national level, over the impoverishment of the working class on behalf of the banks. While the Workers World Party has long served as a “left” appendage of the Democrats, this event demonstrated that the organization is no longer capable of maintaining even a

pretense of independence from the Democratic Party.

On the contrary, it finds its *raison d’être* in basking in the reflected glory of Democratic officials. A Workers World spokesman made a point of thanking US Congressman John Conyers for his endorsement, saying it had been “key to the success of the assembly.”

The promotion of big business politicians and union bureaucrats is all the more noteworthy in that it occurs in the midst of the most concentrated assault on the working class in the country—the bankruptcy of Detroit—which is being perpetrated precisely by these forces.

The city’s Democratic City Council and Democratic mayor are collaborating with the emergency manager, Kevyn Orr, himself a Democrat appointed by a Republican governor to destroy city workers’ pensions, sell off public assets and restructure the city for the benefit of the financial and corporate elite.

Key to the effort to refurbish the image of the Democratic Party and block the development of a conscious political movement of the working class is the peddling of the lie that the Obama administration can be pressured into opposing the attacks by Orr and Governor Rick Snyder.

Watson suggested that the visit by Obama officials to Detroit last month was a great opportunity to get the federal government to intervene on behalf of the workers of Detroit. According to the Workers World web site, Watson “told the assembly that, rather than allow an invitation-only meeting about the city’s future with the Obama administration to take place behind closed doors on September 27, ‘I showed up anyway.’ When she was told there was no room for the City Council at the meeting, she protested, saying, ‘The people of Detroit should be represented here.’ The

assembly applauded her defense of people's rights.”

What a fraud! The Obama administration has intervened in the bankruptcy court to support the bankruptcy, filing a Justice Department brief opposing legal challenges. The administration sees Detroit as a model to gut pensions and health care benefits for public workers across the country.

For its part, the City Council has overseen the elimination of 45 percent of the city's workforce over the last decade, the gutting of fire protection, public transportation and other essential services for city residents, and the payment of hundreds of millions of dollars in interest to the Wall Street banks.

Before the installation of Orr, Council members argued that no emergency manager was needed because they were more than willing to impose the austerity measures demanded by Wall Street. In so far as some local Democrats have grievances with Orr, it is because he threatens their ability to cash in on the privatization of services and the selling off of city assets.

The Workers World Party is a pro-Stalinist organization that has long allied itself with the Democratic Party, promoting, in particular, its African American wing. After decades of collaborating with and defending the attacks by the Democrats and the union bureaucracy on the working class, the organization has been fully integrated into the corporate-controlled political establishment.

What brings all of these forces together is their fear of the emergence of a politically conscious opposition by the working class in Detroit, which would have national and international implications. Such a movement would threaten the capitalist system, which the Democratic Party, the unions, and their pseudo-left acolytes—representing more affluent layers of the middle class—defend.

The day before the “People's Assembly,” the first organized resistance to the bankruptcy in Detroit took place when hundreds of workers, youth and artists participated in the October 4 demonstration to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts organized by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

The demonstration gave expression to the genuine opposition of the working class because it was organized on the basis of rejecting any reliance on the Democratic Party or the trade union apparatus. Instead,

it championed the fight for the independent industrial and political mobilization of the working class, the rejection of all demands for the gutting of pensions and the sell-off of assets, including the artwork of the DIA, and a socialist program, including the nationalization of the banks that are looting the city.

This is the only way forward for the working class.



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