

Chrysler workers denounce Detroit bankruptcy ruling, support Workers Inquiry

WSWS reporting team
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A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team spoke to workers Friday at Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly plant outside Detroit about this week's ruling by Judge Steven Rhodes sanctioning the gutting of city workers' pensions. Rhodes asserted that federal bankruptcy law overrode pension protections stipulated in the Michigan state Constitution.

The ruling opens the door not only to slashing workers' hard-earned pensions, but also to selling off city assets, including artworks from the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA).

Socialist Equality Party supporters distributed the latest edition of the *Auto Workers Newsletter*, containing a statement explaining the significance of the bankruptcy ruling and calling for support for the Workers Inquiry into the Attack on the DIA and the Bankruptcy of Detroit, which will take place February 15 at Wayne State University.

Warren Truck workers unanimously expressed outrage at the threat by the bankruptcy court to rob workers of their pensions. Typical were the remarks of one veteran worker, who declared, "It's terrible. I can't believe they are doing this to human beings. It is leading to a revolution. You can stand out all day protesting, but it doesn't matter. They will continue just the same."

Another worker said, "What do you say to people who have worked all their life for their pensions? It is supposed to be guaranteed. Next it will be Social Security. We will all be working until we die."

Dominique, a young Warren Truck worker, was supportive of the idea of a Workers Inquiry into the bankruptcy. "I would like to know what is really going on. They have already cut the pensions here," she said, referring to cuts on retiree benefits pushed through by the United Auto Workers (UAW). Referring to the

threat to sell artwork from the DIA, she remarked, "I don't think they should sell anything."

Ed, a worker with 16 years in the auto plants, said he was very concerned about the threat to retiree pensions. "I think once you give something up, it's gone. The banks and the corporations dictate what is going on. I believe if you put in something, you should be able to take it out."

He saw the attack on Detroit city workers as a prelude to attempts to strip auto workers of benefits such as company-paid health care. "We all know that we are going to be shifted into Obamacare," he said.

Another worker also voiced support for the Workers Inquiry, saying, "The bankruptcy was a big lie. They have money somewhere. They want to sell anything that belongs to the people that is not nailed down."

A worker who called himself O.J. spoke at length about the bankruptcy and the call for a workers inquiry. He said that before starting at Chrysler, he had worked at Ford for ten years, until he took a buyout. Under the second-tier wage imposed with the support of the UAW, he now earns about one-half the amount he was making at Ford.

Speaking of the bankruptcy judge's ruling, O.J. said, "Everyone else will try that now." He said he supported the idea of an inquiry to uncover the facts about the bankruptcy.

"If you remember," he said, "nine years ago they said Detroit pensions were well-funded. Now, all of a sudden, they want to get rid of it. They did the same thing with the postal workers. They came up with some ruling that it had to be funded for 45 years. Now they have raised that to 75 years. They are making it impossible to have a pension fund."

"We have to do something or we will lose everything. You have to get the young people involved, in

particular.”

Speaking of the situation facing workers in the auto plants, O.J. continued: “It seems like the UAW caters to the company now. The two-tier wage is garbage, but it is the best I can do right now. We got a bonus check and they took out 41 percent for taxes and union dues. It seems like they should pay us at least enough to buy the vehicle we build.”

O.J. said the conditions facing workers in Detroit were appalling. “I am from Detroit. There are no good jobs in Detroit. My sister has two college degrees, including a degree in medicine. Now there are jobs that used to pay \$80,000 a year that are paying only \$19 an hour.”

He said what was happening in the city would set a precedent across the United States. “If it is bad in Michigan it will be bad all over. Michigan is the mover.”



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