

# Hands off the Detroit Institute of Arts and pensions!

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The Detroit media reported Monday that several private foundations are close to an agreement to provide millions of dollars allegedly to protect the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) and the pensions of retired city workers in the bankruptcy process.

One rule of thumb that workers are learning from the bankruptcy process is not to trust anything that is said by the media, the judges, the politicians or the union bureaucrats. The proposed “grand bargain” involving the Ford, Kellogg, Kresge and other foundations is no exception. It will protect neither the DIA nor workers’ pensions.

The terms of the scheme are deliberately vague. According to mediator Judge Gerald Rosen, the “truly generous philanthropic offer of assistance” amounts to \$330 million over a period extending up to two decades. State officials who are supposed to come up with as much as \$100 million have shown little interest in providing any funds, having cut off all state aid to the DIA over the last decade.

Even if the money materializes, it will amount to only a small fraction of the estimated \$3.5 billion in pensions and \$5.7 billion in retiree health care benefits owed to workers.

The scheme is predicated on ending the century-long public ownership of the DIA and handing control of its priceless masterpieces to the powerful corporate and financial interests that stand behind the foundations. For this reason alone it must be opposed. The art belongs to the people of Detroit, not the Wall Street bankers or corporate-backed foundations!

The foundations are not neutral “charities,” but multibillion-dollar operations that have been involved in the dismantling of public education, the promotion of charter schools and other pro-business initiatives in the US and internationally.

Like everything else relating to the bankruptcy, this proposal has been drawn up behind the backs of the people of Detroit. According to the *Detroit News*, Judge Rosen negotiated its terms last week in discussions with bondholders, a union-controlled retiree committee and the foundations that were held at the New York offices of Jones Day. This is the former law firm of Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr. It has been at the center of the conspiracy to use the bankruptcy courts to override the state Constitution in order to destroy pensions and loot the city on behalf of the banks and bondholders.

Rosen—who was appointed by US Bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes—worked out a previous agreement with Jones Day to hand over \$165 million to Bank of America and the Swiss bank UBS, despite the fact that, according to Orr himself, these banks inveigled the city into a financially disastrous interest rate swaps deal that was probably illegal.

The new proposal is aimed at achieving “an overall balanced settlement of disputes in the bankruptcy,” Rosen said in his statement. These are code words for an agreement with the unions to accept a massive reduction in workers’ pensions and endorse Orr’s adjustment plan to restructure the city on behalf of Wall Street and real estate speculators.

Well aware of the mass opposition to the attack on the DIA and pensions, the media and the political establishment have put forward this proposal in an effort to lull the population to sleep.

The mask has to be ripped off and the lies and misinformation stripped away. That is why the Socialist Equality Party is organizing the Workers Inquiry into the Bankruptcy of Detroit and the Attack on the DIA and Pensions. Workers and young people must have access to the truth in order to fight back against this

conspiracy.

Our inquiry is independent of every section of the political and corporate establishment—the Democratic Party, the City Council, the Obama administration, the trade unions—all of which are determined to make the working class pay for the crisis caused by the banks and auto companies. This will be an inquiry by and for the working class.

I urge workers and young people to register for this critical event today.

For more information, see [detroitinquiry.org](http://detroitinquiry.org).



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