

International Youth and Students for Social Equality holds rally to build support for Workers Inquiry

Our reporters
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Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Detroit's Wayne State University held a rally on campus yesterday to build support for next month's Workers Inquiry into the Bankruptcy of Detroit and the Attack on the DIA and Pensions.

While the rally was being held, the attorneys for the banks and for Detroit's Emergency Manager were meeting in court a few miles away to work out a strategy to slash pensions, cut social services, privatize municipal utilities, and to orchestrate the looting of the art in the Detroit Institute of Arts. The IYSSE at Wayne State is playing a leading role in fighting to clarify the political and historical issues that workers and youth are facing in the Detroit bankruptcy.

IYSSE members and supporters explained that the purpose of the inquiry, which will be held February 15 on the Wayne State campus, will be to expose the lies behind the bankruptcy proceedings.

The bankruptcy is a planned effort by the financial elite to strip away social gains made by the working class over more than one hundred years of political struggle. Detroit—once the center of American industry and the site of bitter working class battles—is being used as a test case for a deeper assault on workers across the country.

Speaking at the rally Larry Porter, chairman of the Workers Inquiry, explained “there is overwhelming information demonstrating that the bankruptcy was a pre-meditated conspiracy against the working people of Detroit. The purpose of the Inquiry,” he added, “is to bring out the truth of why the bankruptcy is taking place in Detroit.”

IYSSE National Secretary Andre Damon also addressed the rally: “The slashing of food stamps for 48 million people, the sequester cuts, and the attack on the pensions

and services in Detroit are all being done on the basis of the claim that there is no money to pay for social programs, even though the US government is handing out \$75 billion in cash handouts to the banks on a monthly basis.”

Damon explained that any opposition to the bankruptcy must be waged on the basis of a Marxist understanding of the history of Detroit and the role of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

“What no section of the political establishment can acknowledge is that the growth of social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the capitalist system. No social problem—from war, to poverty, to the attacks on democratic rights—can be addressed without breaking the grip of the corporate and financial plutocracy over society.”

“Detroit is the centerpiece of the fight for the reorganization of society on the basis of social need and not private profit,” he added. “But if you want to fight the attack on the social rights of the working class, you have to know what you are fighting.”

Jerry White, labor editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, also addressed the rally. “Nothing the working class ever gained was won without the bitterest struggle,” he said. “Today there is mass opposition to the bankruptcy, the robbing of pensions and the DIA. But the unions, from the UAW to AFSCME, have refused to call a single significant demonstration, let alone strike, against the looting of the city.

“That is because the unions have become businesses themselves, concerned only with how much pension money they can invest in the market. That is why they have called for the selloff of the artwork in the DIA. The unions are also directly tied to the Obama administration and the Democrats, who no less than the Republicans,

insist that the working class pay for the crisis caused by the speculation of the banks and the failure of the capitalist system.”

Members of the IYSSE spoke to several of those amongst the gathering that braved snow and freezing temperatures to attend the rally.

Terrence, a Wayne State student, said that he was very disappointed in the role of the Obama administration over the past five years.

Nate told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “the workers of Detroit dedicated their lives and worked all of their lives just to build this city. The government is behind this, and I don’t approve of anything they are doing. Now I hear they are going to take the art! They’re trying to [mess] with the city of Detroit. And this is going to have a trickle effect. The government in other cities is going to keep doing this to people. They look at Detroit and say, ‘They did it there, so let’s do it here.’

“I’ll be there at your meeting on the fifteenth,” Nate said.

“He is not what we were promised in his campaign,” he said. “For example, his new health care plan. They’re taking more money from working people, but it’s hard enough as it is. Health care should be free and people should have some type of shelter, but they’re taking more money for themselves.”

Another student told the WSWS: “The way this city has managed the pensions is so [messed] up. The banks are at fault. The dealings with the pensions and with the swaps are an example. I’m not cool with it, and now they’re going after the art. They are making decisions for the financial barons. But there should be mass transit and education. That’s how Detroit should be revitalized.”

Sierra, another student, said, “I think it’s time people start participating in defending our constitutional rights.”

When asked about the inquiry, she said: “We have got to expose those people.”

Razi, a student from Iran, added: “This is capitalism, and people don’t like living that way.”



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