

Detroit workers denounce bankruptcy restructuring plan

Thomas Gaist
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Workers and youth in Detroit spoke out Saturday against Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr's plan of adjustment, which imposes unprecedented cuts to pensions and health benefits owed to retired public workers.

The plan calls for pensions to be cut by 34 percent and permanently ends cost of living increases received by some 23,500 retirees. These cuts, in addition to the imposition of thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket medical expenses, will mean pauperization for thousands of retirees whose current pension checks barely keep them out of poverty.

Even the corporate-controlled media, which has spent weeks claiming a “grand bargain” between the state government, private foundations and the unions had “saved” pensions, was forced to acknowledge the severity of Orr’s plan. In a column Monday, “pension cuts in Detroit’s bankruptcy plan would be devastating and unfair,” *Michigan Radio* wrote that the average pensioner will see their annual payment cut to \$12,540 per year under the adjustment plan. In its article, “Detroit bankruptcy plan includes deep pension cuts,” the *Los Angeles Times* wrote “the blueprint to manage Detroit’s debt asks current and retired employees to bear the brunt of cost-cutting measures.”

The day after the announcement, the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with workers at Eastern Market, the city’s major farmer’s market.

“I thought my pension was safe. Now they’re trying to take money I earned over a lifetime,” Doug, a 70-year-old retired city worker, told the *WSWS*. “We paid for those pensions while we were working. They counted all that as part of our salary. America is a dictatorship. The politicians want to cut everything we have. They’re violating the constitution that they swore to uphold.

“Today we have so many poor people, a dictatorship is necessary to keep the poor in line. The rich want to take everything. They think we are breathing too much of their air. If the people don't take their own power, we're going to lose everything we've won in the past.”

Doug continued, “A good society has to be built on equality. We're not even close to that now. Think about this: You steal 50 dollars and you go to jail. A politician or a corporation takes millions and that’s called fund raising and doing business.”

Truman Peters, a city worker for 36 years, said, “They use bankruptcy when it’s advantageous to them. This bankruptcy has been planned for a good while. They went into bankruptcy to take the pensions: that’s obvious! In fact, guys like Kevyn Orr have specialized in this stuff their whole lives.”

“There is a face to all 23,000 retirees--a story to each of them. Their dependents, and in fact the whole economy of the city will suffer from them losing their pension money.”

When the *WSWS* pointed out that AFSCME and the UAW have done nothing to resist the bankruptcy, instead offering large concessions at every opportunity, Truman responded, “The unions have done nothing to defend us. They are just patsies for management.”

Constance, professor of Architecture at Lawrence Technological University, spoke about the bankruptcy process. “It was all pretty much decided at a very high level, through a back room process. Orr and his firm are clearly benefiting greatly. Our leadership has failed us, in all sectors.”

In relation to plans to privatize the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Constance said, “The UN charter says that every human has a right to culture. All humans share the desire for beauty. Public museums are as crucial to society as public schools. To privatize

the museum, is really indecent."



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