Workers and youth largely absent at Clinton rally in Detroit

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Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton made a campaign stop in Detroit Friday to shore up support in a Midwest industrial state the Democrats had just a week ago considered firmly in their camp. The fact that the Clinton campaign felt it necessary to visit Detroit, with its large working class and African-American population, reflected concerns that a lack of enthusiasm for Clinton and a lower than anticipated turnout, particularly by black voters, could tip Michigan, with its 16 electoral votes, into the column of Republican candidate Donald Trump.

A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team covering the event noted that workers and young people were largely absent from the audience. Most of those in attendance were older middle-class professionals and people close to the trade union bureaucracy.

The event, held at Detroit's Eastern Market, seemed to have been hastily cobbled together. The venue was too small to hold all those who came to hear Clinton speak and hundreds of people were turned away after waiting in line for more than an hour.

Clinton herself spoke fairly briefly. In what was billed as a "get out the vote rally," the former first lady, senator and secretary of state began by thanking a long list of local Democratic officials. She followed this by touting her record as secretary of state under President Obama. She then issued a string of empty platitudes and made her standard appeals based on race and gender issues.

At one point she hailed the "record profits" of the auto companies. She did not mention that these profits came at the expense of the jobs, wages and retirement benefits of thousands of auto workers, decimated under the terms of the auto bailout organized by the Obama administration.

Speaking in a city devastated by decades of corporate downsizing, standing within blocks of shuttered and dismantled factories and entire neighborhoods blighted by intense poverty—a city that was thrown into bankruptcy in order to rob city workers of their pensions—Clinton, a multimillionaire, said virtually nothing about unemployment or poverty. Instead, she touted the record of the Obama administration, which supported the Detroit bankruptcy and has presided over an enormous growth of social inequality throughout the US.

She made vague promises about a "fairer" economy, advancing a series of tepid economic proposals, including an unspecified increase in the minimum wage and help with student loan debt. She spoke of a jobs program to repair infrastructure, without explaining that her plan is based on providing tax windfalls and other handouts to induce businesses to hire workers at near-poverty wages.

The WSWS spoke with audience members, including firm Clinton supporters, who did not hide their doubts and general lack of enthusiasm for the Democratic candidate. One person in attendance said she was concerned by the failure of both candidates to seriously discuss substantive issues. "I think at this point they are playing the game the media controls," she said. "Each campaign is centering on the media."

Kathy, who holds a professional position with the energy monopoly DTE, said that while she was planning to vote for Clinton, she was appalled by the ongoing wars in the Middle East. "I wouldn't fight," she told the WSWS. "I don't think it is fair for the poor people to make all the sacrifice in these wars. We have to learn to live in peace. That is the only way for mankind to survive. I do not believe in war."

Lori, a software engineer, said she agreed that there was little difference between Trump and Clinton on many issues. "Both candidates are ignoring the North Dakota oil pipeline," she said, referring to recent protests by Native Americans in North Dakota over attempts to build a pipeline across tribal lands.

"Neither candidate is looking to the future, to what can be done for the economy," she added.

She was also disturbed by Clinton's attempts to bait

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Trump over his alleged ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. “I am not sure how much is reality and how much is propaganda,” she said. “I don’t think the US should be antagonizing Russia. We should not push Putin away. The last thing we need is a US-Russia nuclear war. Russia is weaker than when it was part of the Soviet Union. Therefore it is more likely to react in a defensive manner.”

Christina, a Detroit-based photographer, arrived late for the rally and was one of those excluded. She said she planned to vote for Clinton, but then confessed bitterly, “I don’t want to vote for either one of them. I don’t want either one in office.”

Trump, she said, “lacked common decency.” But, she noted, “Clinton has lied and tried to avoid direct questions. I don’t feel that she is any more trustworthy than Trump. The real questions are not being addressed. The debates are a joke. They are not talking about anything pertinent.

“Health care is a mess. I haven’t had health care since April. I am terrified of another major recession.”

This reporter explained that both parties were seeking to control the political debate and exclude the critical issues facing the working class. The Socialist Equality Party was running its own candidate for president to raise before the working class the necessity to break from the Democrats and build an independent party to advance its own interests, based on the fight for international socialism.

Christina said she had voted for third party candidates in the past, but now felt it was a waste of her vote, given the political monopoly enjoyed by the Democrats and Republicans. She explained that she had voted in the Republican primary to keep Trump out and would now cast an unenthusiastic vote for Clinton for the same reason.

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