



No to cuts in workers' pensions/health benefits!

Oppose Orr's anti-worker bankruptcy plan!

Detroit Emergency Finance Orr has submitted his Plan of Adjustment to the bankruptcy court. It's a plan to decimate the retirement and health care funds owed to city workers. It promises to reduce the workforce and wages. And the plan jeopardizes the financing of the Detroit Institute of Arts, a treasured part of Detroit culture. Prior to releasing the plan, Orr and the City Council also decided to privatize the trash collection system, another anti-worker disaster.

There are about 23,000 retired city workers who currently get modest pensions. The Plan would slash these payments by at least 26%. These pension cuts are supposed to be prohibited by the Michigan Constitution, but if workers challenge the cuts in court, Orr will increase the cuts to 34%! Retirees are already barely making it so this will spell financial disaster for many.

Health care benefits for retired workers would be radically changed. Under a new VEBA (Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association) plan, the city would no longer be responsible for retiree health care coverage. Instead the city budget would pay an inadequate sum of money to the unions, who would then bear the burden of health care costs. A retirees' committee negotiating with the city says city health care funding would greatly decrease under the VEBA. With less funds, workers are bound to see increased costs for premiums, insurance that covers fewer health problems, rising out-of-pocket expenses, etc.

The mass media has been praising how great Governor Snyder and the capitalist foundations are for volunteering about \$800 million to reduce Detroit's deficits and save the DIA. But it's been spelled out that these "kindly" gestures are only going to happen if the unions give up their ongoing efforts in the courts against the bankruptcy proceedings. The so-called Grand Bargain of the capitalists is that the workers should just agree to get run over.

Orr's plan does call for sacrifices from certain banks, creditors and bondholders, too. But that's no reason for the workers to be targeted. The rich corporations and banks are the cause of the crisis, and they should bear the burden. Orr wants to squeeze the work-

ing people and make them suffer as much as possible. To counter this, the workers need to turn up the pressure on Orr.

How can that pressure be turned up?

Clearly, Detroit Mayor Duggan won't help. He's long made it clear he wants to cooperate with Orr.

The union leaders are still challenging the bankruptcy in the courts and this has irritated Orr and his friends, but even there the union officials wrongly targeted funding the DIA. While the court case drags on, the pressure on Orr is limited because the union leadership has generally refused to mobilize the workers into public protests, not to mention walkouts or other workplace actions. Rather, they have long been advocating their own alternative sizeable concessions package. Indeed, it's a bad sign that just prior to the release of Orr's bankruptcy plan, the AFSCME leadership agreed to employees paying several thousand dollars more for health care costs in 2014.

Despite the limits of the struggle so far, the rank-and-file workers and the poor have begun to make themselves heard in certain ways. AFSCME Local 207 organized a walkout of some water department workers in 2012, and this past July they called for a rally and picket against pension cuts and privatization. Presently there are a number of worker and community meetings and protests. The message is spreading that the problem is not the modest pensions and wages of the workers, but the profit-mad corporations, banks, and the politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike.

We workers face a tough road. But there's no need to accept Orr's measures as our fate. We can resist austerity. When protests occur, join in! Spread the news of the protests among your coworkers, among the rank and file in the unions and in the neighborhoods. Start to build networks and groups in solidarity with the city workers. Let's reply to Orr, Duggan and Snyder with our own plan.

**Hands off pensions and health benefits!
Down with Orr's Plan of Adjustment!
Solidarity with the city workers!**



Lessons from the Boeing machinists' struggle

Raking in record profits, and sitting on a backlog of 4,777 orders for planes, in November Boeing launched a campaign to extort more: if the machinists did not submit to unprecedented concessions demands, and the State of Washington to its demands for more tax relief, Boeing would move production of the new 777X to a lower-wage area of the country.

So the corporate prostitutes of both political parties rushed to give Boeing \$8.7 billion in tax incentives plus state-funded training help, and on January 3 the machinists voted to accept a contract that does away with defined benefit pensions (which they won in 1947), raises workers' healthcare contributions, and under which starting pay for the bottom three pay grades will be at the state minimum wage at the end of the contract. Additionally, the workers are locked into this rotten contract for 10 years, while Boeing can still subcontract or outsource work under it!

This is a defeat for all workers, which the CEOs of other corporations will now try to outdo. More, the closeness of the acceptance vote -- just 600 votes out of more than 23,000 votes cast -- only highlights the need to draw lessons from it:

1) The Democrats are also corporate servants: Dem. Sen. Patty Murray mediated the secret talks between Boeing and the union; Dem. Gov. Inslee then called a special session of the state legislature to give Boeing another handout; Murray, Inslee, and the entire political establishment did propaganda that the machinists had to bow to Boeing's demands.

2) The role of International Association of Machinists (IAM) leaders was also to help Boeing: They went behind the workers' backs and negotiated with the company, then tried to rush through a proposal the rank and file had little time to study and organize against. After that failed by a 2-1 margin in November, the International scheduled the next vote to occur when many workers would still be away on the holidays. Meanwhile, the District 751 leaders, who had been split over recommending a yes or no vote in November, did organize against the second proposal. But in a move that sabotaged the fight by the rank and file, they closed comments on their website.

This shows why machinists and all workers need to get organized independently of and against the Democrats and trade union apparatuses. Indeed, for the next ten years Boeing workers are going to have to fight on many shop and plant issues that the labor bureaucrats won't fight on. But the screwing of the ma-

chinists is just part of the class offensive of the entire capitalist class. Thus, more than ever, Boeing workers should add their numbers to all of the progressive movements in society, and to building a truly independent movement of the working class. □

Struggles break out against fracking

Mass struggles have broken out recently against fracking – in the U.S., Canada and Romania in Europe. Fracking is a method used by the energy monopoly capitalists to extract natural gas from the ground. It poisons the groundwater and has been proven to cause earthquakes, but the greedy capitalists are working day and night to spread its plunder of the natural environment. Already much of central Pennsylvania has been devastated by fracking and the frackers have their sights set on upstate New York, Michigan and elsewhere.

Since this past fall the Mic Maq (Elsipotog) Native People of New Brunswick, Canada, have been blocking the fracking capitalists from drilling in their area. The Mic Maq have stood up to police assaults from the RCMP and are still fighting. In Romania people have carried on a militant fight against the frackers. Around the U.S. many groups are opposing fracking. Two films, *Gasland 1* and *2*, which have been shown recently in Detroit, have attacked fracking and called for a ban on it.

Spurred by the ongoing economic crisis, the energy capitalists have been stepping up their plunder of the environment. In addition to fracking, they are increasing offshore oil drilling (remember the BP disaster?), removal of dirty tar sands oil in Alberta, extension of leaky oil pipelines, hazardous transportation of oil by railroad car, removal of mountain tops in Appalachia in search of coal, etc., etc., all with the acquiescence of both the Republicans and the Democrats.

The capitalists are destroying our natural world. A working-class environmental movement is needed to fight back! □

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