

# *Detroit Workers' Voice*



Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group P.O. Box 28536, Detroit, MI 48228 detroitworkersvoice@yahoo.com April 28, 2014 #112a

**Come out on May 1<sup>st</sup>, International Day of Workers' Struggle!**

***Support Detroit city workers' fight against cuts to pensions and health care!***

***No to capitalist austerity! Make the rich pay for the economic crisis!***

**Rally 12 noon, Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, Hart Plaza      March to Grand Circus Park, Rally at 3 pm**

**(sponsored by the May Day – Detroit Coalition)**

May 1<sup>st</sup> is the traditional day of working class protest and struggle around the world. Workers declare their class unity in the immediate battles of the day. And they express their longing for a world free of economic exploitation and ruination of the environment, free from discrimination by sex and nationality, free from war and imperialism, in short, free from the capitalist rulers! Socialist society is the long-term goal, a society where the workers rule. But such a society should not be confused with the state-capitalist regimes like China, Cuba or the former USSR, which have become havens for private capitalists as well, or the reform regimes where the capitalists have long run things.

The May Day tradition goes back to the strike of Chicago workers in 1886, when the capitalist authorities hanged four radical leftist leaders. Since then May 1<sup>st</sup> has become a symbol for worker militancy and socialism. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers marched in cities across the coun-

try, helping revive this day of action. The May Day tradition has mainly been dumped by the sellout leaders of the trade union leaders here. They want to pacify the workers and convince them that their only alternative is concessions and the mythical pro-worker Democrat.

This year in Detroit, a May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstration will focus on the fight of the Detroit city workers. They are being robbed of their pensions and health benefits. City workers have been hit by wage cuts and job cuts. City enterprises, like garbage collection, are being sold off to private enterprises who seek quick profits for themselves, not better service. This round of attacks was started by Republican Governor Snyder but the Democrats are on board too. What's happening to Detroit city workers is part of what's happening everywhere.

Workers, let us stand up for our own class brothers and sisters! Let us fight for the working class against the capitalist robbers! Come out May 1<sup>st</sup> and raise your fist against Orr and against the worldwide campaign of capitalist austerity! []

***Solidarity with Detroit city workers!***

**Reject Orr's new bankruptcy plan! No cuts to pensions/health benefits!**

Detroit Emergency Manager Orr and the retirement organizations associated with the main union leaderships have reached a new tentative deal that continues to slice city workers' pensions. This new agreement is supposed to be a great relief to workers compared to earlier plans, but it still stinks. Overall the new plan also continues Orr's efforts to slash jobs, wages and

health benefits and privatize. The plan also jeopardizes funding for the treasured Detroit Institute of Arts. City workers will vote on whether to approve this plan in May.

The pension agreement for non-uniformed workers doesn't cut pensions as much as Orr's previous pro-

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posal of an immediate 26%. But it's still outrageous. Present pensions are modest already. But the latest plan slashes them 4.5%. And the plan eliminates cost-of-living raises so inflation will steadily erode what's left.

After 10 years the buying power of pension payments will almost certainly decline by another 20-30% and could be much more. Firefighters and police pensions were frozen and about half their cost-of-living adjustments remain. Both these pensions were supposed to be protected by the Michigan Constitution, but the bankruptcy judge doesn't care. The old Orr plan would immediately crush the pensioners; the new plan slowly pushes them into poverty.

The new plan continues to hit employee health coverage. The city drops their responsibility for health care, turning it over to the union. At most the city will pay some money to a new union VEBA (Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association) plan. Retiree committees acknowledge this will greatly decrease city health care funding. So workers are bound to pay more for premiums and out-of-pocket costs and get less comprehensive policies.

For months the mass media has been touting how Governor Snyder and capitalist charitable foundations will give \$815 million to save the pensions and the DIA. There was a condition though. Union-backed court challenges against the bankruptcy plan had to stop. The new agreement offers to end the court challenges and saddle the workers with grim concessions. That's bad enough. But there's still no guarantee that

the promised funds from Snyder and others will actually appear. No one is sure whether the Republican-dominated state legislature will approve the \$350 million promised by Snyder. And the leader of the state Republican majority, Jase Bolger, wants more concessions first. He wants the union organizations to use their own funds to pay for the budget crisis.

Workers can still resist Orr's plan. Why should they pay for the crisis caused by the big banks, the corporations, the state Republicans and the city Democrats?

True, it's hard when the city union leaders are so anxious to make concessions. From the start of bankruptcy talks they have offered \$180 million in concessions to the city. They are warm to the awful new agreement too, though they want certain details to be worked out. Just before the bankruptcy talks, AFSCME leaders had already signed off on an agreement costing each employee thousands of dollars more for health care for 2014.

Thus, the struggle depends on the rank and file. Expose the new "kinder" agreement and encourage a "NO" vote on the latest Orr plan! There may appear to be resignation to the new plan. But however the vote turns out, the anger of the workers will remain. Certain rumblings have already been heard. In 2012, AFSCME Local 207 organized a walkout of some water department workers. In recent months there's been a number of worker and community protests.

**All workers should rally around the city workers!  
Stand as one against capitalist austerity!**

## ***Postal workers demonstrate nationwide against privatization at Staples!***

On Thursday, April 24, postal workers of the American Postal Workers Union demonstrated at 56 Staples Office Supply stores across the US against placing postal vending operation inside Staples stores. A vigorous picket of over 70 union members was held for two hours in front of the Dearborn Staples at Outer Drive and Michigan. Passing cars gave a great deal of support, honking their horns.

The vendor workers that postal management plans to put in Staples stores would not be postal employees or unionized. It's another effort to bring about the piecemeal privatization of the USPS using low-wage, poorly

trained workers. Postal workers of all crafts and other workers and activists should continue the fight against the employers greedy privatization plans.

**Website: [www.comunistvoice.org](http://www.comunistvoice.org)**

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