

# **On the Resignation of the Detroit Branch from Workers World Party**

Monday, July 15, 2018

July 15, 2018 -- After more than a year of good faith (on our part) internal party struggle, the Detroit branch of Workers World Party today resigns from WWP of our own accord. All other options have been thoroughly exhausted, and all channels of recourse and reconciliation were closed to our branch. Throughout this internal struggle it became abundantly clear the contradictions existing in WWP are irreconcilable.

## **Background**

The Detroit branch has been the longest continually functioning branch of Workers World Party, since the branch's formation in 1970. We have continued over the decades to be a strong branch with multinational leadership, and we have grown stronger in recent years with many communist youth joining, including comrades of color, women and LGBTQ youth. The branch has mobilized and participated in all national mobilizations of WWP. The branch has been the center of many of the domestic class initiatives of Workers World Party, from the People's Energy Committee campaign for a takeover of the oil industry, the All People's Congress to Overturn Reaganism, the Food is a Right Campaign, and the Job is a Right Campaign. WWP in Michigan held ballot status in the name of Workers World Party for four statewide elections in the 1990s, and mobilized for every WWP national election campaign. The first managing editor of Workers World newspaper outside of New York City was from our branch, and our comrades played leading roles in party mobilizations in every part of the U.S. on domestic and international issues.

We have observed a lack of centralization and direction in Workers World Party for many years. Important initiatives with national and international implications were basically ignored by the national party. In Detroit, a majority African-American city, the struggle for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions and against the municipal bankruptcy and austerity, all dictated by finance capital, was treated as a local initiative, despite the leading position the branch played in the fight against the banks and financial institutions.

## **Reorganization and attacks**

In the nearly 60 years WWP has existed, there have been few, if any, genuine democratic centralist structures on a national level and in most localities. Considerable growth in membership and the deepening crisis in this period led to the formation of a commission to reorganize the party. Detroit branch representatives played an active role in this effort. Two Detroit comrades authored the founding documents for an Interim Central Committee. The proposal for the ICC was unanimously adopted by a nationally representative commission empowered to restructure WWP.

The Secretariat, a body of six people in the New York City branch serving as the de facto "executive" leadership and their allies, primarily in the Durham, North Carolina branch, did everything in their power to undermine the new, nationally representative, Interim Central Committee. After months of slander and attack, the Detroit branch was isolated nationally and removed from all leadership positions, including a comrade who served as an editor for Workers World newspaper. Our communications were

censored from national email listservs, most notably a unanimously adopted resolution, from our branch, demanding the reinstatement of Detroit comrades to all leadership positions.

As a follow up to the attack on Detroit, an even more vicious attack is now being carried out against the Baltimore branch. The Baltimore branch, like the Detroit branch, is one of the only continually functioning branches of WWP for over 40 years, operating in a majority African-American city, and like the Detroit branch, immersed in the struggles of the oppressed community and respected in these efforts.

Any charges of sexism and even hints of sexual assault must be seriously examined and action taken where the charges are substantiated. But that is not what has happened in the case of Baltimore. Comrades have been expelled with no due process whatsoever. The branch leadership has been suspended without a hearing of any kind. The national question has been completely disregarded. The attack has been led by many of the same forces that were used against Detroit, primarily the Durham branch and the New York City “youth” grouping. These forces are opportunistically utilizing this situation for their own ends.

The Secretariat, in the case of Baltimore, as with Detroit, has thrown the comrades who have built this party under the bus.

## **Behind WWP’s degeneration**

What is at the root of this degeneration of Workers World Party? We view it as the complete abandonment of a class struggle perspective by the Secretariat. There were many indications corroborating this analysis. When the West Virginia teachers strike occurred, the West Virginia WWP branch attacked the strike and called for the teachers to pay reparations. While these renegades were coddled by the Secretariat, our branch leadership, some of whom went down to West Virginia to support the teachers, was attacked for calling for their suspension. In fact the ideological current of labeling white workers as settlers and abandoning the multinational working class as an agent of revolutionary change is prevalent in WWP. This view was openly stated by a comrade during an ICC meeting, is displayed on the Facebook page of a North Carolina comrade, etc. The Secretariat has refused to address this issue and instead a young communist African-American leader from Detroit was vilified within the party when he gave a Marxist critique of “third worldism” on social media.

Before the last so-called leadership meeting, WWP First Secretary Larry Holmes wrote a memo where he stated that the struggle for the basic economic needs of the workers and oppressed was secondary to what he termed the “political struggle” against war, racism and special oppression. The same New York youth who have spearheaded the attack on Baltimore then issued a document for which they were praised in the party attacking the Detroit branch for fighting against water shutoffs, foreclosures and the imposition of austerity and emergency management by finance capital in this Black city, saying we should be struggling to get streets renamed instead.

The material basis for this degeneration of Workers World Party seems to lie in the subordination of the party leadership to the North Carolina branch. In this branch many of the leaders are executives and board members of non-profit entities with large funding coming from the liberal bourgeoisie, including the heirs of the RJ Reynolds family (whose fortune in part derived from slavery), Arcus Foundation (Stryker Corporation), Ford Foundation, Overbrook Foundation (Wall Street), etc.

Unfortunately the Secretariat has appeared to embrace the NGO model employed by North Carolina which has played such a destructive role in undermining revolutionary struggles in the U.S. and worldwide.

By sanctioning attacks against its longest and most determined members by “comrades” and even “candidates” who have been in the party for only a year or as little as a month, the Secretariat has opened the door to the possibility of Cointelpro and the cops sowing division and destroying the organization, as it has done with revolutionary organizations for decades.

## **Moving forward**

We communists formerly belonging to the Detroit branch of WWP -- which today ceases to exist as a branch of Workers World Party -- will continue our revolutionary struggle here in this oppressed city and internationally. Not for a moment will leaving WWP stop our organization from fighting for the water, housing, freedom, and self-determination for our people in the city of Detroit and the peoples of the world. Our mass work will continue to be rooted in our communities, serving the needs of the people, and challenging the system fundamentally. We will not waiver in directly fighting finance capital, the fundamental basis for imperialism, as we have for years.

There is a dire need for a Leninist party in the U.S., and we will continue to endeavor to build one on a nonsectarian basis with whatever tendencies and forces will engage with us. We do not perceive charting our own path from WWP as fracturing the left; it is undialectical to assume new formations will not develop in a period such as this.

More information and analysis of why we came to this important decision will be provided in the weeks and months to come. It is imperative as dialectical-materialists to analyze and learn from our history.

We encourage any current or former comrades of WWP or other individuals interested in collaborating with us moving forward to contact us.