

Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky Socialist Agitator

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Rust Belt Reflections

By Daniel M



August 11th and 12th featured one of the first major steps toward Democratic Socialists of America becoming a political force in our region: the first Rust Belt Conference, where over 23 chapters came together to learn and build off the organizing they're already doing in their locals. Not only was DSA Metro Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky one of these chapters, we also brought the largest contingent of (21) organizers to connect with socialists from around the country, hosted three workshops highlighting some of our chapter's most significant victories and efforts, and pressed for regional campaigns - in particular, water justice throughout the Ohio River and Great Lakes region. Despite hours of distance, we found that comrades from all over the rust belt share similar struggles.

DSA Metro Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky brought three workshop presentations of our own, showing the victories the chapter's been able to win, the importance of internal organizing, and its push for regional efforts within DSA. The first of these was Neoliberal Austerity in the Stacks, which told the story of how local coalition Our Library, Our Decision!, was built through the work of local Cincinnati DSA members and successfully saved the north building of the downtown Cincinnati Library from being sold off to private developers. **con't. on page 2**

Summer of Solidarity in Poems and Pictures

By Mary O'Connell

Pride

Our rainbow rose clad comrades marched,
and a sweet bouquet of socialism ascended
from the carnival of corporate stank.



Haiku for Independence

Solidarity
with those whose freedom's oppressed
CHINGA LA MIGRA!



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Rust Belt Reflections con't.

The second was Being Good Comrades, an open discussion on the experiences members have had with establishing codes of conduct & grievance policies in their locals.



The third of these was From the Ohio River to the Great Lakes: Water Justice and Socialism, which formed the launching point for DSA Metro Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky's push for a larger water justice campaign. The discussion, led by the Cincy and Pittsburgh Chapters, highlighted the ways capitalism had threatened the region's water supply, and how these connected to a larger, international struggle around water, as a climate disaster fueled by capitalism awaits us in the future. From here, the chapter made a call to build connections across chapters and find out how we can build the structures we need to fight for an eco-socialist future.

The second day of the conference was marked by one of the most memorable moments for the Rust Belt as an organizing body. The morning began with a one-hour brainstorming session (facilitated by the author of this piece and a Pittsburgh conference organizer) asking chapters to describe the struggles they had faced in their locals, and the larger issues to be accounted for on regional, national and international levels. A prominent theme was frustration with the national organization not lending enough support to local chapters, a conversation that's often been repeated in the org. What was new about this was the second section: One devoted to finding solutions to these problems. This led to proposing communicative structures & regional infrastructure that up to this point are unprecedented in DSA.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Upcoming October Events

10/16 - Brake Light Clinic 5-9PM at Heritage Hill Elementary

10/22 - Environmental Justice Working Group - 7-9PM at New Spirit

10/27 - DSA Movie Night presents THEY LIVE - 730-930PM at New Spirit

Summer in Solidarity con't.

We Eat, We Play, We Plot

The planet's on fire,
and so are we,
bringing people together,
to build a socialist sea.



These Months in Local Leftist History

By Brendan F

On September 27th, 1972, the longest strike ever mounted against General Motors concluded as the United Auto Workers Local 674 won a new contract from the Assembly Division plant in Norwood. Primarily focused on achieving better working conditions, the strike began in April, and lasted 174 days. The end results were a mixed bag.

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Rust Belt Reflections con't.

To quote C.M. Lewis, a fellow DSA Rust Belt member:



C.M. Lewis
@thehousered

Following

But the great part was the response. It wasn't to throw hands in the air, or to just shitpost on Twitter, or just hang it up and leave DSA. The response was to organize something that could a.) advocate for common interests b.) provide the support we're not getting elsewhere.

3:58 PM - 12 Aug 2018

The afternoon featured a closing sing-out of Solidarity Forever, bringing everyone together one last time to mark the completion of a conference that was a remarkable first for the organization. Pictures were exchanged, contacts were made, and talk of regional campaigns dominated the last conversations before members departed to their respective homes across the Rust Belt.

Only a few weeks out from that weekend at the writing of this article, the impacts of the conference are already obvious. The regional water justice campaign has created a slack channel to begin coordinating between the many chapters and members interested in building an eco-socialist movement in the region. Communication and contacts between chapters continue, building organizing relationships between members of various locals. And even now, its impact on the rest of DSA can already be seen, as the Southern Caucus begins planning for a conference to come next year as well.

Ultimately, DSA has to become a body that can coordinate millions of people, organizing people locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. While the organization might not be there yet, the successes and lessons from the Rust Belt Convention, not to mention the logistics of putting together a conference with 150+ attendees, put on full display a region of organizers that want to do the work to get there, and are actively asking how to accomplish this, in solidarity with all present and future comrades.

These Months con't.

Across the country, workers at GM plants were pushing back against assembly line speed-ups, workforce reductions, and seniority rights-- all of which were part of a new "General Motors Assembly Division (GMAD) Program" designed to tighten production standards. The UAW responded with a series of strikes, including the bitter Lordstown strike, where the GMAD plant was pushing cars through at double the previous rate, overwhelming the workforce, who resorted to sabotage in protest.

Though workers had been itching for a fight, with 98% voting to authorize a strike in February, UAW leadership insisted on staggering them in Ohio: first Lordstown, then Cincinnati. This angered many workers, who saw it as intentional sabotage to weaken what would have been two simultaneous and united strikes. Workers' opinion of union leadership was already low, as during the previous year the Local 674 was put in receivership (that is, taken over) by the national union in response to the Local's attempts to challenge GM's termination of seniority rights. Few workers were satisfied with the new contract, which offered some concessions. Opposition among workers in the "non-skilled" classification ran particularly high. The battle had been grueling, with the Norwood GM plant forced to scrap over a thousand cars in varying levels of completion and workers suffering \$19.2 million in lost pay, while the union paid out about \$3.5 million in strike benefits.

The strikes went on elsewhere in the country, with 1973 seeing three smaller wildcat strikes by UAW, but the Norwood plant would never see such vehement labor agitation again. It limped on under the cloud of smaller labor disputes, high worker absentee rates, and a steady decline in production, until GM finally shuttered the plant in 1986, taking over 4,000 jobs with it.