

MARCH 21 DAY OF ACTION: SICKOUT, WALKOUT, STAY-OUT

Rally at the Fisher Building at 12 noon — 3011 W. Grand Blvd. — March on Woodward

STRIKE TO WIN

The Emperor has no clothes

Governor Snyder and his new Emergency Manager, Judge Steven Rhodes, have issued an ultimatum: if Snyder is unable to implement his schemes through the state legislature, then EM Rhodes will start *cancelling teacher pay-days*—starting next month on April 8.

The Governor is behaving like a man out of time. For years, his dictatorial regime in Detroit had sought to dismantle the public schools piece by piece, and each year he imposed incremental cut-backs and school closings on his path to creating a cheap, second-class charter district. Now, Governor Snyder is attempting to force through his agenda in a single, desperate surge.

Nearly all of the Governor's major policy decisions have become national scandals. The EAA "Snyder schools" in Detroit have consistently ranked among the very worst in the country, and made headlines last year when various EAA authorities were indicted on charges of corruption. The Flint water crisis, in particular, will be Snyder's most enduring legacy. In each of his dictatorial Emergency Manager regimes, Snyder's own administration proved to be the real emergency. That administration is now rapidly unraveling, and Gov. Snyder is making a foolhardy bid to create one last, major disaster: the wholesale destruction of Detroit's public schools.

A bankrupt leadership

The "mister nice guy" posturing did not last very long—Emergency Manager Rhodes has effectively declared war on Detroit's teachers.

In his first important financial action as EM, Rhodes has threatened to cancel teacher paychecks. He arrogantly expects teachers to work for free, i.e., as slaves. However, this action is not really about the district's finances, which have descended far too low to be saved by such a small sum of money. No, this action is

about power, and it is a critical test of whether Rhodes can force teachers to submit to his management after the long winter of teacher sickouts that thoroughly compromised the power of the Governor's takeover regime. If Rhodes can get away with one act of tyranny, then he can come back for more. And more is precisely what Rhodes is seeking.

As a federal bankruptcy judge, Steven Rhodes managed the enormous and unprecedented bankruptcy process for the city of Detroit. He sold out the city's largest assets for only a small fraction of their actual value, imposed water shut-offs against Detroit's residents, and gutted the pensions of city workers. His appointment as Emergency Manager of the schools implies the threat of a butcher putting the district on a chopping block, which is an image that Snyder has tried to avoid, knowing that it could backfire in a spectacular manner. The fact that Snyder is weighing that risk is itself a sign of desperation and growing uncertainty about whether he can implement his agenda.

In the sport of baseball, whenever a player makes a wild and desperate swing, there should be only one result: a *strike*.

Defeating the Governor's allies

Side by side with the state takeover of the Detroit schools—and serving the same master—the takeover of the teachers' union is now displaying its depravity more than ever before.

Ivy Bailey and the union takeover leadership are making preparations to prevent a strike. At the March 10 membership meeting, they attempted (and failed) to pass a proposal that would have required any vote for a work action to achieve a two-thirds majority. Their proposal would have also created an intermediary mechanism for engaging in ballot fraud. After members overwhelmingly rejected the proposal, Terrence Martin attempted to re-motivate the measures and even demanded that the meeting

redo the vote. The second vote failed even more miserably than the first. Teachers refused to be fooled by the backhanded schemes of the DFT takeover.

At a moment when the Governor is politically isolated, suffering from abysmal ratings and struggling to gain support even from members of his own party, it is a bitter shame that the leadership of the DFT is slavishly serving as his ally. Not only that, but Ivy Bailey and the union takeover leadership have been the *only* people actively campaigning in Detroit on behalf of the Governor's plan.

Ivy Bailey, Randi Weingarten, and other union bureaucrats have completely betrayed the teachers. Their only real demand has been that the Governor continue to pay them the teachers' union dues through automatic check-offs, and in exchange for that dubious promise of getting their money, they have been willing to be the Governor's agents against their own members. Rather than be advocates and leaders for the teachers, Bailey and the other bureaucrats have been parasites on the teachers. We have no need for false leaders who only pretend to fight for us—we can fight perfectly well for ourselves.

Strike to win

In the 1980's, the conservative Reagan administration dreamed of privatizing America's schools through vouchers, charters, and undemocratic takeovers—but they largely restrained themselves out of fear that they would cause massive strikes and labor wars. Today's politicians by comparison have grown more arrogant, and they imagine that they can dupe people into submitting to anything. Whether they are right or wrong, we will make them so by our own actions. We will *teach* them what they can get away with and what they cannot.

This is our moment. Our team is on the field, we have the ball, and Snyder keeps hitting fouls: it's time to strike him out.

If there is no struggle, there is no progress.
—Frederick Douglass, 1857

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A Caucus Fighting for Civil Rights and Public Education in the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers
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