

Columbia, South Carolina: “I think we need a social revolution”

Our reporter
18 October 2011

About 150 people attended the first day of the Occupy Columbia protest in South Carolina’s capital city starting Saturday morning at 9 a.m. Protesters gathered outside the state house with handmade signs and talked informally in small groups.

By 10 a.m., a large proportion of the protesters had gathered in front of Gervais Street, with their backs to the state house. They appealed to passing motorists, holding up their signs and chanting, “We are the 99 percent and so are you.” The motorists frequently honked their car horns in response, bringing cheers from the gathered protesters, who also spoke individually to the occupants of cars with their windows rolled down whenever they stopped at the light.

Our reporter spoke with a participant named Julie, 36, who held a sign that said “Economic Equality Now.” She explained, “Somebody that makes a million dollars shouldn’t pay less than everyone else. Politicians are basically owned by the corporations and the higher tax bracket people are selfish. Corporations are not going to regulate themselves. What we have is taxation without representation.”

When asked what he thought should be done about inequality, David, a biology student at Midlands Technical College in Columbia, said, “I think we need a social revolution. If we change a few policies, they will be reversed over time. We need to make government and corporations obsolete.” David said that these institutions should be replaced by genuine democratic decision-making. He added that the labor unions, with their leaders making million dollar

salaries, are not democratic either. “The unions are only there to protect the unions.”

The call of the *World Socialist Web Site* for a new political party of the working class fighting for socialism and the overthrow of capitalism met with wide approval in discussions with protesters.

A different sentiment was expressed by the most vocal participants in the “social mic” session, which occurred several hours into the protest. Ostensibly a method of making the words of speakers audible to all participants, the practice of having the entire audience repeat short phrases spoken by a speaker had the effect of enforcing an illusion of unanimity between speakers and the rest of the protesters. In this session, one speaker enthusiastically declared, “Finally a movement that is neither for or against the president! Finally a movement that is neither for or against the wars!”

After this session, a high school teacher attending the protest expressed relief to hear that the Socialist Equality Party opposes Obama’s policies, including the invasion of Libya.

In the afternoon, a march sponsored by MoveOn started at Finlay Park and joined the protesters on the State House grounds, swelling the number of protesters to several hundred.

Groups of policemen were stationed at regular intervals along the walkways encircling the grounds, and kept up a presence on the state house steps and by the group of protesters gathered at Gervais Street.

Around 25 protesters spent the night on the state house grounds, and were rejoined on Sunday by protesters who had left for the night.



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