

“The police are here for the government and the corporations”

Demonstrators denounce police brutality at Occupy Melbourne

Our reporters
22 October 2011

Protesters occupying Melbourne’s City Square in support of the Occupy Wall Street movement were violently removed from the site in a co-ordinated Victoria Police operation yesterday. (See: “Australian police attack Melbourne protest”). Demonstrators and city workers spoke to WSWS reporters about the assault.

Shannon from New Zealand has been camping nights at the protest. He said police had used pepper spray, batons and punched people. “I saw one man with a bleeding nose” and “someone was trampled by the horse ... Later, when they were trying to push the protest up Swanston Street, they ran their horses into the crowd,” he continued. “All around it’s been very dangerous because they’ve been pushing us and we were very close together...”

“The main issue is the system that results in skyrocketing profits for corporations while the rest of the people’s standard of living is going down... And there’s the corruption of democracy. Politicians make laws to appease corporate contributions and it extends from that to corporate dominance and inequality, inequality of political power and economic power.”

Kevin, who works near Melbourne’s City Square and joined the protest yesterday said: “I found myself in the front line. I was with an actor friend. We were all there with linked arms with other people. My friend was punched in the chest by a policeman. A girl next to him complained, saying ‘He wasn’t doing anything.’ Next thing she was punched in the throat and head. She went down but got back up again and I saw her later speaking out.”

Coby, a young Aboriginal man and his partner Rorey, described how they were verbally abused and beaten by police. Coby, who was hospitalised after being assaulted by police, said: “I was kicked in the groin while they [police] held me up. They had two cops holding me and someone else kicked me. They hit me in the back, I don’t know with batons or their fists, it was all happening so fast.

“They told me to stand up and walk. I physically couldn’t walk because I’d been kicked between the legs... I couldn’t walk so they kept hitting me again, about six or seven times.

“They also homophobically taunted us, one officer without his name badge walked past us later after I had been chucked back onto Swanston Street saying ‘goodbye girls’ and making a limp wrist gesture.”

Rorey said, “Allie Hogg [a friend] was taken away before me. She was choked and dragged away. The cop was pretty much homophobic and racist and said you’re next, and I was. They punched me in the back of the head, dragged me away in a choke-hold, threw me on the ground, and then all I saw was Coby come back and he couldn’t walk and they threw him on top of me.”

Kat, an RMIT international studies student, said that police were “lashing out at specific people, pushing people onto the ground.” “They were capsicum spraying ... and people were breathing it in and had to move a lot faster. I don’t approve of it, it’s definitely police brutality,” she said.

Shey, a Year 8 student who has been staying at the camp, said riot police were “grabbing people’s hair or clothes and pushing them down. I finally managed to get out of the actual crowd on to the corner of the street and then I got maced by one of the riot cops without any warning.

“One of my mates,” he continued, “had his thumb broken and another had his ankle cut open. A lot were thrown to the ground. People were dragged by arms and legs, people were punched in the face; females were punched in the face by police. This was a peaceful protests, the only people who have used violence is the police.”

Chris, a plumber, said: “Liberal and Labor—it’s the same coat of paint ... All you’re seeing now is the corporate voice. The government is driven by corporate interest ... What the police are doing here is on behalf of the state government and the corporations.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact