

Minneapolis: “We need to establish a redirection of the flow of wealth”

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Hundreds of workers and students, angered by war and the corporate onslaught against living standards, began to congregate October 7 at the Hennepin County Government Center Plaza in Minneapolis, Minnesota to launch their version of New York’s Occupy Wall Street movement.

Demonstrators have renamed the plaza “The People’s Plaza” for the duration of their occupation and plan to maintain a presence through the night. The WSWs spoke to many of the occupiers to ask them why they have taken this action.

Matt Boynton, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, said, “I think in the past 50 or 60 years there’s been a lack of working class activism. The reason I came down here is that I saw Occupy Wall Street as an opportunity to build a new social movement. I think the most exciting aspect is that it is spreading outside of New York to places like Boston, Los Angeles and here in Minneapolis.

“The problem we face is capitalism itself. It’s parasitic. It lives off the backs of workers in the United States and Internationally. And I think Wall Street is a good metaphor for that.

“We need to think outside the current system and look to change the economic system through socialism and not through the politics of the two-party system.

“I’m a grad student, and we could use more funding, less fees. There’s this privatization of public education, and that has left a lot of people deep in student debt.

“While most people here are not talking about the wars, nevertheless they should be ended. There are over 1,000 US military bases overseas, and they should be

shut down.”

Duncan and Dan, both graduate students at the University of Minnesota, spoke to the WSWs. Duncan said, “We watch a lot of news, including the major media outlets, and while the major media outlets are not ideal, still, the statistics showing the growth in the wealth gap between the top 1 percent and the lower 99 percent has grown out of proportion since the 1980s and something has got to change.”

Dan added, “I think it’s ridiculous to cut programs for people in need to supposedly save the economy. It’s the poor people who need jobs. The rich people already have more than enough money.”

“As far as the elections coming up,” Duncan said, “there are no candidates that are delivering on their promises. There’s no GOP alternative that would benefit the American people. Romney is worth \$250 million. Cain and Huntsman won’t do anything for them, either.

“Obama ... he isn’t living up to what his expectations were. He said he would get out of these wars. And with the deficit as large as it is, that should have happened. But it didn’t. Afghanistan is now the longest war in US history. That’s why I’m here. This is definitely a grassroots movement, and I’m hoping something comes of this.”

“I would agree that there’s a change coming,” Dan said. “There’s more of a progressive movement. There are people that don’t agree with what’s going on in all directions. We have a stalemate in Congress. And my parents, who are conservative, even they agree that the government is not working. There should be more

taxation of the rich and regulation.”

Joe, an older worker with a history of opposition to war and corporate assaults on workers going back to 1960s, told us, “I want to see working people valued as much as the moneyed people. We want our rights recognized and we want to see the wars ended.

“This movement has to stop the government. It has to stop the way the government functions, the way they waste money. For the corporations, money seems to be more important than life.

“The say we can’t afford schools here when we’re supposedly building schools in Afghanistan. In Iraq, they’ve spent a fortune. But it’s all been a waste because the money goes to corporations in the guise of nation building. If we were building schools in Iraq and Afghanistan and America, that would be fine. But to combine that with the killing machine, I just can’t support it.

“We need to establish a redirection of the flow of wealth. The top 1 or 2 percent control so much when compared to the poverty of so many. Everything is going to the corporate elite—the so-called job creators.

“I link the current movement to the events in Wisconsin, where there was a right-wing Tea Party takeover of the state. And to the European revolution that’s going on now. These are all related.”



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