

Amidst police crackdown, widespread public support for Occupy movement

Joseph Kishore
27 October 2011

Recent polls show widespread popular support for the Occupy Wall Street movement and its basic aims, centered on opposition to inequality and corporate domination of politics. The growth of support comes as local governments, implicitly backed by the Obama administration, are moving to shut down demonstrations—in some cases, violently.

Recent police actions against protesters found their most brutal expression to date in Oakland, California. On Tuesday evening, one protester received a skull fracture after being hit in the head by a flash grenade thrown by police into a crowd. Over one hundred were arrested in the evening protests, on top of 150 in the morning. The protests continued into Wednesday.

The Democratic Party mayor of the city, Jean Quan, moved quickly to declare her unconditional support for the police. (See, “Thousands march to denounce police brutality against Occupy Oakland”)

President Obama was only a few miles away at the time of the violence Tuesday night, after attending a \$5,000 a ticket fundraiser at the W Hotel in San Francisco. Obama said nothing about the crackdown. Later in the evening, in an appearance on the Jay Leno show, he said that people were “frustrated,” lumping together the Occupy Wall Street protests with the right-wing Tea Party.

Obama appointed this week as his senior campaign adviser for 2012 Broderick Jonson, a longtime Wall Street lobbyist. Obama has raised far more money from the financial and banking sectors than any of his Republican rivals, and many of his top donors are hedge fund managers.

Democrats have in general taken the leading role in arresting Occupy demonstrators, including in Chicago, where Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama's former Chief of Staff, has led the crackdown.

Police in Atlanta, Georgia arrested 53 early Wednesday morning in an encampment located in Woodruff Park, a public location. The raid included police in riot gear and helicopters overhead. Mayor Kasim Reed, also a Democrat, justified the actions as a necessary response to unsubstantiated concerns about “public safety.”

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, Republican Mayor Richard Berry ordered a raid last night that led to the arrest of 31. Again, police were clothed in riot gear and used pepper spray against unarmed protesters. The encampment was located at Yale Park, on the campus of the University of New Mexico, which had revoked a permit for the occupation.

City officials in Baltimore, Maryland announced Wednesday that the occupation in McKeldin Square, a public location, was illegal and only two protesters would be allowed to stay overnight.

According to one website that has tallied public reports, there have been 2,511 arrests since the Occupy Wall Street protests began in September.

The police actions are aimed at intimidating not just those directly involved in the protests, but the broader population that is overwhelmingly opposed to the massive social inequality that has become the defining feature of American society (see, “Government report says richest 1 percent doubled their share of US national income”).

A New York Times/CBS poll released on Tuesday found that 43 percent of the population said they agree with the basic aims of the Occupy Wall Street, compared to only 27 percent who said they disagreed. The remainder said that they were not sure.

Two-thirds of the population said that wealth was not distributed fairly.

The same poll found overwhelming popular hostility

to the government and the two big business parties. According to the *Times* report, “Not only do 89 percent of Americans say they distrust government to do the right thing, but 74 percent say the country is on the wrong track and 84 percent disapprove of Congress—warnings for Democrats and Republicans alike.”

Meanwhile a Pew Research poll found that for 18 percent of the population, the Occupy Wall Street movement was the top news story they were following, second only to the condition of the US economy, which came in at 20 percent.



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