

Occupy Wall Street: Dozens arrested as New York mayor warns of more prosecutions

Dan Brennan
24 October 2011

During his weekly radio program Friday, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg warned of increasing police action against Occupy Wall Street demonstrators. Five weeks on, the protest against inequality and the domination of the corporate and financial elite has shown few signs of abating, prompting an uneasy and threatening response from the mayor.

While admitting that protesters have not initiated any violence, Bloomberg noted that the marches proceed “sometimes without permits” and that the city administration “will start enforcing that more.” Although not specifying any exact plans for stepped-up enforcement, the New York Police Department (NYPD) has proved its willingness to make mass arrests, including over 700 on the Brooklyn Bridge on October 1 and another 35 in Harlem this past Friday.

Bloomberg’s remarks during the radio address continued to play up the supposed inconvenience of the occupation to residents and businesses around Liberty Plaza, thereby providing a pretext for eventual eviction. “There are businesses, people going to work, going to school, there’s drumming in the middle of the night, people just using the streets as bathrooms.” These noise and sanitation concerns, he argued, have resulted in three or four tenants threatening to cancel their leases.

Yet even among the local residents, there are sharp divisions in their attitudes toward the protests. Community Board meetings with Occupy Wall Street representatives have solicited roughly equivalent numbers of residents defending the occupation as those opposing it.

Bloomberg nonetheless seized on the latter, offering

his interpretation of the first amendment. “The Constitution gives you the right to assemble, the right to protest,” he said. “I would also argue it gives you the right *not* to assemble, *not* to protest, and you don’t want to take away those peoples rights.”

The mayor offered no such Constitutional muddle in his defense of the city’s “stop and frisk” policing policy, the subject of an Occupy Wall Street-affiliated protest Friday in Harlem. During the demonstration, 35 were arrested as protesters blocked the entrance to a police precinct. The policy targets working class youth, particularly black and Latino young men, who are stopped on the street without any reasonable suspicion of criminal activity and searched by police for illegal possessions.

Statistics analyzed by the New York Civil Liberties Union consistently show the vast majority of those stopped, roughly 90 percent, are completely innocent. The NYPD under the Bloomberg administration has increasingly relied on “stop and frisk” to harass and intimidate growing numbers of jobless and impoverished youth. The NYPD is on track to stop and frisk over 700,000 this year.

The occupation at Liberty Plaza continued to draw support from thousands of visitors stopping by throughout the week. The WSWs spoke with a number of them. Ryan DuBois, an unemployed college graduate, explained why he felt compelled to visit. “This is the biggest protest movement in my life,” he said. “It is more than just a protest in DC, when people just march and people go home.”

He continued, “With the two-party system it is impossible to represent a country that is so big. The most important thing is that people are getting into the democratic process. Something new is being built here,” he said. “I don’t know how long this will last.

People see what is going on around the world. In the Middle East dictators are falling. We are on the precipice of a new movement, a class-conscious movement.”

Talia Pulcini first came to Liberty Plaza three weeks ago and felt compelled to return Saturday. “I am 23. I am a student who is in debt even though I decided not to go to the school of my choice because of the cost of college,” she explained. “I have worked since I was 13. I was looking for a restaurant job after I got out of school so I could paint, but I can’t get that. I’ve never seen this situation where you can’t get a job in a restaurant.” Under these economic conditions, Talia said she had little hope of finding a job as an artist.

Referring to her sign, Talia added, “The standard of ethics of the one percent is out of touch with the rest of us. They go to different schools. They live in different neighborhoods. Donations and charities are good, but it is like bread and circuses for the masses. My idea of ethics is to do something that is not necessarily done for profit. It is to do something that betters society. Unfortunately the system facilitates the profit motive for the one percent.”

Andre Cooper, a Verizon field technician in Manhattan, told the WSWS why he considered it necessary to participate in a rally Friday supporting the Occupy Wall Street demonstration. “I am out here to fight for my job. They are trying to take away our living. Everybody is entitled to a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work. Why is it only the elite have good health care, why not everyone? Why shouldn’t workers be entitled to the same privileges? You don’t have to have people in the poor house just to make a profit. Reinvest in the workers, better training, better health care.

“Every time something is brought up in Congress, they say it will kill jobs,” Andre added. “But there are no jobs being created. There is \$2 trillion sitting out there [in the corporations]. They are not doing anything with the money. I still support the president, but we have to make corporations accountable. Occupy Wall Street is good. It has been a long time coming for people to get involved in this country. It took getting

this bad for people to wake up.”



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