

New York: DA will not drop charges against hundreds of Occupy protesters

A reporting team
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Manhattan district attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. will not drop the charges against hundreds of Occupy Wall Street protesters who were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge on October 1. According to lawyer Martin R. Stolar, prosecutors would only offer “adjournment in contemplation of dismissal” (ACD) to 300 who had been charged with disorderly conduct on that day.

Press reports quoted Stolar as saying “That’s an offer that we will convey to our clients. Of course the decision is up to them. My guess is that a number of them will reject it and insist on a trial.” The ACD offer means, first of all, an indirect admission of guilt. Just as significantly, by promising dismissal of the charges if they are not arrested again in the next six months. It serves as a tool of intimidation and discourages further participation in protests that can once again lead to mass arrests.

The Wall Street occupation in Manhattan’s Zuccotti Park, now in its 40th day, has attracted the support of hundreds of doctors, nurses and other health care workers, many of whom have been active in “Teach In/Speak Outs” in the park that are held every Wednesday and Sunday. The health care activists attracted media attention on October 23, and organized an “Occupy Healthcare March Against the For-Profit Health Insurance Industry” on Wednesday October 26 that was scheduled to begin from Zuccotti Park and end at the closed St. Vincent’s Hospital about two miles north, in the Greenwich Village neighborhood. The protesters sought to call attention to the role of the health insurers and other profit interests behind the closure of neighborhood health centers and hospitals like St. Vincent’s.

Protesters at Zuccotti Park were angered by the police attacks on Occupy Oakland and elsewhere in recent days, and spoke about the political issues with the

WSWS. Mike Boyte, who works in a coffee shop, said, “I came out here to see the reaction to the attack in Oakland. It was a really unnecessary attack on the protest, using tear gas and rubber bullets. It’s really important that people tried to defend the park. About a week ago more than 1,000 people turned out to defend the New York occupation.

“How can we trust the police? The police defend the state, they are the armed wing of capitalism. They are active in gentrification, in stop-and-frisk, in arresting people” for exercising their rights.

“We need to stay independent of the Democrats. They are used as a safety valve. They channel the movement into electoral politics. They drain the lifeblood out of every social movement in this country.

“This is a political question, not an organizational question. People had to come out against the Iraq war because they couldn’t vote against it. People don’t see the alternative to the Democrats.”

Asked about the role of the unions, Mike replied, “There is a difference between the union members and the union leaders. The leaders are the foot soldiers for the Democratic Party.

“I didn’t think this was serious until the Brooklyn Bridge arrests. Then I thought, if the state is taking it seriously, I should. I would like some radical movement to come out of this. It should push capitalism and push the state.”

Julian, a New York University student, said, “I think it’s excessive that they used violence [in Oakland] when the protests are non-violent. I know it’s a public space and they should be allowed in a public space. They shouldn’t shoot people or use tear gas. This isn’t the 1960s when the police could do whatever they wanted.

“Are we going back to Chicago 1968 or Kent State? I

think the people in power see this as a threat to the status quo. The elite are content, they want to keep the system in place, and we need to overthrow it.

Discussing the Democrats, Julian said, “The two main political parties are two sides of the same coin. They make promises just to get in office. Obama promised change but we are deeper in the mire now than before. This goes back to Reagan and the decline of American capitalism.”

When asked what he thought about socialism, Julian answered, “Socialism is an attractive idea now, and it is viable. Marx was on the money when he wrote that capitalism would destroy itself. When all the wealth is on top it’s a shaky foundation.”

Brady Messey, a college student from Poughkeepsie, 70 miles north of New York, said he was part of the Occupy Poughkeepsie movement. Brady said they were approached by MoveOn.org, and told them that they would fight any attempt to co-opt the movement.

“The way things are going I am going to be 100 grand in debt when I leave college,” he said. “The education system is messed up.

“More young people need to get involved in this movement. We need more acts of civil disobedience. We need an independent third political party. We need leaders, someone who can articulate our problems. My generation feels like they have no hope under the current capitalist system.”

Lex Smith just graduated from Columbia University with a degree in finance. He is currently unemployed.

“What happened in Oakland yesterday was a disgrace,” he said. “She (Oakland Mayor Jean Quan) is cutting off her nose to spite her face. It’s clear to me that the Democrats are trying to co-opt this movement.

“The trade unions are the same as the Democrats. My father is a Jamaican immigrant who came to the US. He has worked in construction as an independent contractor. He can’t get into the union.”

Asked about the socialist alternative to capitalism, Lex replied, “To be honest with you, I think if we lived in a socialist society we would be coming up against the same problem – greed.”

Seeking to explain Obama’s record, Lex said, “My only problem with Obama is that he does things at a glacial pace. It is crazy that we are spending \$800 billion on war. Why can’t that money be put into jobs? And why does it cost \$4.50 here to come into and out

of the city? A lot of people can’t afford that. The system is untenable.

“If an alien came to our world, he would say that we are insane, insanely barbaric.”



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