

A day of international action against Wall Street

Patrick Martin
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The demonstrations worldwide on Saturday, called in sympathy with the Occupy Wall Street protest in New York City, have given voice to deep undercurrents of popular anger against the entire economic system. Hundreds of thousands of working people marched in cities around the globe, taking a common stand against inequality.

The Occupy movement has erupted more than eight years after the mass international protests against the preparations by the United States to attack Iraq, which brought 20 million people in countries around the world onto the streets. While the current demonstrations are not yet as large as the anti-war protests of February-March 2003, they show a growth in political consciousness among wide layers of workers and youth.

It is significant that the demonstrations have developed largely outside the framework of the official parties and trade unions, particularly in the United States. The Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO, along with the many groups that work to bolster these pro-capitalist organizations, have sought to co-opt protests that, in their basic orientation, are going in a different direction.

The basic thrust of the Occupy movement is the call for social equality and opposition to class oppression. The main slogans seen on hand-made signs at demonstrations focus on the theme of corporate power and inequality. One aptly summed up the general sentiment: “The system is not broken, it was born this way.”

The centrality of class cuts across the efforts of the

middle class “left” organizations that have for decades promoted various forms of identity politics, focusing on race, gender or sexual orientation, as a means of blocking the development of an independent political movement of the working class and bolstering the parties of the bourgeois political establishment. There is a growing recognition that all working people face the same conditions of poverty, unemployment and exploitation.

The demonstrations are significant in another regard—their international character. Signs in English among the hundreds of thousands protesting in Spain, Italy and other countries proclaimed, “We are the 99 percent.”

The global character of the protests and the sense of international solidarity is fundamentally a reflection of the global character of the capitalist crisis. Globalization has integrated workers of the world more tightly than ever before in a single economic system. Working people face a common enemy, in the form of the bankers and multinational corporations that control the world economy.

The growth of understanding of the international character of the struggle of the working class is the political hallmark of 2011. The year began with the upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt, in which millions of working people rose up to bring down the decades-old US-backed dictatorships of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak.

Within days of the ouster of Mubarak, workers in the US state of Wisconsin took to the streets against demands by Governor Scott Walker for the destruction

of jobs, wages and union rights, many carrying signs comparing the Republican governor to Mubarak and proclaiming their determination to “walk like an Egyptian.”

Throughout the summer, Europe has been rocked by strikes of Greek workers, occupations of public squares by the Spanish *Indignados* (indignant ones), rioting in the most deprived areas of Britain, and other manifestations of opposition to austerity policies and the destruction of jobs. Israel has seen the largest demonstrations in its history against social inequality, and hundreds of thousands of youth in Chile have taken to the streets to oppose the attack on public education.

These protests have interacted with and drawn inspiration from one another. In particular, the growth of opposition within the United States will have a transformative effect. For millions of people throughout the world, the American ruling class is the principle source of militarism, repression and financial parasitism. The US has long been portrayed as a country somehow excluded from the historical struggle of the working class against the profit system and for socialism. In reality, there is no country where class conflict is more deeply rooted.

The Occupy Wall Street protests mark a significant turning point. The governments and bourgeois media have endlessly trumpeted their solution to the crisis: the devastation of society through the destruction of public education, health care and other services and the slashing of jobs, wages and pensions—all in order to preserve and increase the wealth of a tiny minority at the top.

Now there is the initial expression of another solution, posed as yet only implicitly by the global protests. The anti-capitalist orientation of this emerging opposition must be developed into a conscious movement for socialism, entailing the seizure of the accumulated wealth of the financial aristocracy and the reorganization of economic life, under the democratic control of the masses, to serve the needs of the entire population, not private profit.

The socialist transformation is possible only through

the mass mobilization of the international working class in a common struggle. The Occupy demonstrations are an anticipation of this coming and even more powerful movement.

Opposition to capitalism is still at an early stage. The great issues of perspective and program have hardly been raised. A new program requires the building of a new political party and leadership.

Only the International Committee of the Fourth International, organized in Socialist Equality Parties throughout the world, fights in every country on the basis of a revolutionary socialist perspective. We urge young people and workers who are entering political struggle today to join the SEP and fight for this perspective in the international working class.

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