

Occupy Portland threatened by Oregon's leading newspaper

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An editorial in Friday's *Oregonian* made no effort to conceal the choice that is being prepared by Portland's Democratic mayor if Occupy Portland does not, as the newspaper put it, "end sooner." Revealing the rising concern that the protest may ignite a much larger social movement, the paper ominously warned, "Or it can end later, and end badly, either in a spasm of violence involving someone at the camp, or the inevitable police action if the occupiers insist on pushing their protest to a bitter end."

This remarkably blunt threat comes only two days after the police assault on anti-Wall Street protesters in Oakland, California, in which Scott Olsen, 24, was critically injured when police shot a supposedly non-lethal police projectile directly at his head. Other demonstrators who attempted to come to his aid were then themselves attacked with tear gas.

Cities across the country have witnessed a series of repression or threats of repression directed at local Occupy events. Police in New York City have arrested over 900 since the protest began on September 17. Chicago, headed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's former chief of staff, has ordered several hundred arrests.

In San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and other cities, authorities have warned protesters that the occupations have to be ended. LA's Democratic mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, said the occupation outside City Hall "cannot continue indefinitely."

In San Diego, 51 protesters were arrested early Friday morning and their campsite was dismantled. Police in Nashville swept through an Occupy camp at 3 a.m. after giving a 10-minute warning, arresting 29 protesters.

Tens of thousands of workers, young people and other social layers have been attracted to the various rallies and marches organized by Occupy Portland since its initial October 6 march, which had an estimated 10,000 participants.

The same day as the threat from the *Oregonian*, a rally was organized at downtown Pioneer Square. Ostensibly organized as a free concert given by Pink Martini. It bore all the hallmarks of traditional Democratic Party tub-thumping politics: speeches by local politicians, homilies by various religious figures and an address by the top official of the Oregon AFL-CIO and a community activist.

Tom Lauderdale, founder of Pink Martini, is described on their web site as "working in politics, thinking that one day he would run for mayor. Like other eager beaver politicians-in-training, he went to every political fundraiser under the sun."

The editorial was not shy about its preferred political future for Occupy Portland either, stating that the rally is a "sign of what's possible if the demonstrators would take their political movement beyond the cover of the tarps hanging over the two downtown squares." In other words, integration back into the pro-capitalist political structure.

Since Occupy Portland's kickoff march and rally, which attracted 10,000 demonstrators on October 6, tens of thousands have attended their various events. This explains why the official political and trade union structure is displaying increasing nervousness as the Occupy Portland movement enters its fourth week, and a fear that the anti-Wall Street protest will ignite a much larger social movement.

About 5,000 attended the Pioneer Square rally and several spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Brian Gilroy told us, “I just happened to be walking by, but I support the Occupy movement because of the influence of corporate money on government. Corporations have millions of dollars to influence politicians. I think socialism would be a better path and more beneficial for people.”

“I think the Occupy movement is good,” said Roger Noehren. “It’s successfully drawing attention to a lot of big issues: corporate personhood, 7,000 homeless sleeping outside in Portland every night. I think it is impressive that 500 people have camped downtown. Their message is very disparate. It’s hard to pin down and I don’t think it should be pinned down.”

Shane Reed works as a chef. “I’m new to this,” he said. “I live out in Hillsboro so I came down to check it out. It’s crazy, you have all these feelings and then you come down here and find so many people who feel the same. Businesses and corporations, like McDonald’s, one on every corner to make you feel you need to buy stuff. People losing their homes is absolutely wrong when multibillion-dollar corporations are being bailed out. And their CEOs are on \$100,000 vacations while we can’t even pay our bills.”

Shane continued, “I have countless friends who have graduated college and who are working minimum-wage jobs. Employers want seven years’ experience just to get a job. They are trying to pay off their college debt with the same job you can get out of high school. A friend graduated from Cornell and he now works as a waiter.”

Greg, an immigrant worker, spoke about his experience as a bus driver for Tri-Met. “The present contract expired at the end of ’09 and the services we provided were contracted out to First Transit, which is a huge transit company. First Transit took over our yard and promptly tried to sack 43 people. What dominates is a confrontational approach which is taught to all managers. We work for a hostile company.”

On the Occupy movement he said, “You put the seed in my head that it is the origin of something bigger. Personally, I would wish a more confrontational approach. If you look at the various movements over the decades, they have been repressed, crushed or co-opted. Obama has put the criminals in charge. You

guys have to change the political parties here.”

Jaye Martin, a returning student at Portland State University, said, “The important thing about this movement is that people finally have a voice, a venue to express their anger and frustration. My ex-husband, a businessman, lost his business and then lost our very nice home. He tried to work in a system that, we were told, would help us out. My disabled neighbor gets \$118 in food stamps per month, so she lives on noodles and tomato sauce. How do you live on \$118 in food stamps?”

“I lost my health insurance once I got divorced. A program at PSU allowed me health care coverage with Kaiser. However, Kaiser is no longer enrolling new applicants. Universal health coverage is one of my passions. We are the only leading industrial country without a national health care system, and it is morally unethical and shameful. I am back in school and I have no idea how I am going to pay back my school loans once I graduate.”



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