

San Diego: “Why has no one gone to jail for the financial crisis?”

Our reporters
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On October 7, San Diego became another of the many cities across the United States to see a swelling on the streets of popular opposition to Wall Street and the policies of the financial elite.

According to different estimates, 1,500-2,000 people rallied in Children’s Park and proceeded to march through downtown—the march continually growing. Eventually the crowd ended up back at the park where many were setting up tents and preparing food and medical centers for those who are planning to stay indefinitely.

The protest was composed of workers, unemployed, small business owners, the retired, and a large concentration of youth and students. The WSWs spoke to many participants during and after the march.

Sierra and David Weinberg both work for non-profits and were at their first protest. They both thought it was refreshing to see people on the streets whose daily lives have been affected by the economic crisis.

“The people who have the money have no accountability. It’s like a disease that is chronically untreated,” said Sierra. “It makes sense that this movement is happening at this time. Kids are coming out of school without a job, an inability to access quality health care, and a crushing amount of student debt.”

David agreed, “It’s a form of slavery, when you can’t pay back your debt you should be allowed to file bankruptcy. It’s just like the home mortgage industry, people are being asked to pay money that they just cannot pay.

“We would like to puncture the bubble of the 1 percent—their money, politicians and large estates—we want them to know we are here. Why has no one gone to jail for the financial crisis? I keep on putting money into my 401(k) but its value only goes down. Yet they continue to make money from it. It’s legalized gambling!”

As we spoke with the Weinbergs, Casey Pfeiffer, an engineer, joined the conversation. Speaking about Obama, Casey stated, “Everything he said he was going to do, he did the exact opposite. The Democrats and Republicans are the same thing, it’s a false dichotomy. It’s like offering Coke or Pepsi—it’s still soda, or McDonald’s or Burger King. The financial elite doesn’t care if there is a Democrat or Republican in the White House so long as the politician follows their agenda.”

“Wall Street and the 1 percent is a great place to start,” Casey said, speaking about the Occupy Wall Street movement. “Understanding that finance is the center of the problem and that it controls everything is important. People need to understand what their real history is, not what the mass media has been telling us. We need to step out of all these controls that the rich have put in place.”

Marie Webber came to the Occupy protest as a medic to provide health services and was planning on staying as long as it took. She was there to set up a street clinic for all those who would be staying over.

Referring to the social crisis confronting youth and students and the lack of work, she said, “That’s why I’m not in college! There are no jobs out their right

now for college graduates. I think the protest will be successful because of all the people that are here.”

Jason, a computer science student, spoke about the increase in tuition over the last decade. “In 2001, it was \$650 per semester to go to San Marcos, today it’s over \$3,000. We can’t afford college anymore. Even if we get jobs we are debt slaves and are held for the rest of our lives. If the corporate executives get to vote for our salaries, why can’t we vote for theirs?”

Christine, a small business owner, told us why she was at the protest. “I’m disgusted with the extent that the corporations have been able to manipulate every aspect of people’s lives. There is a real inability for people like us to get out of debt. I own a small business and I am barely able to get it off the ground because of all the mandated insurance fees.”

Student Janet Hammel told the WSWS, “It’s my responsibility to be here today. I have been to protests and none of them accomplished much. When my mom was a kid she protested for Chicano’s and women’s rights, but now it’s not about that anymore. It’s about class.

“It’s a struggle just to go to school, worrying about when or even if I will receive financial aid. I don’t receive medical anymore.”

Asked whether she felt the Democrats represented her, Janet said, “No. They are only there because there has to be an opposing party.”

Steve Masz, a lawyer, also attended the protest. He said, “All the wealth belongs to the top 1 percent and I am here because I believe in progressive income taxes.

“Most of my clients and the majority of families cannot come up with thousands of dollars to hire a lawyer in case of a legal emergency. You can’t run a business when half of the people have nothing.”



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