

Syracuse, N.Y.: “Democrats or Republicans, they’re not listening to the people”

Steve French
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Despite the inclement weather, more than 200 supporters of Occupy Syracuse marched through downtown Saturday. Since October 3, there has been an encampment with a dozen or so protesters committed to occupying the small Perseverance Park situated next to the Chase bank.

Participants were from diverse backgrounds in terms of political experience, including a contingent of students from Syracuse University. For many, the demonstrations are their first political protest.

Many protesters said they had been inspired to act by economic conditions, the Egyptian revolution, and the Wisconsin protests and occupation of the state capitol building in Madison.

Others expressed a general disappointment in the Democratic Party and Barack Obama. Participants were frustrated and angered that the Obama administration has done nothing to fix the economic and unemployment crisis for working people, and that the influence of corporations drowned out their own voices in the political process.

Like industrial areas across the country, Syracuse, a city of close to a quarter of a million people at its height, has declined by more than half over the past few decades. Many large multinational corporations—General Electric, General Motors, Carrier, to name a few—have laid off workers en masse and pulled up stakes.

Recently, Magna Corporation, which produces auto parts, announced it was closing, laying off its workers at its nearby 1.5-million-square-foot New Venture Gear factory. Some of the largest employers in the area currently are Syracuse University and the casino industry.

Linda, who is a medical professional, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “One of the reasons we’re here is because we’re against austerity. I don’t feel like the voice of the people is being heard, only the corporations. I don’t think it matters who is in control, Democrats or Republicans, they’re not listening to the people.”

Linda’s two children who recently graduated from college have encountered delays in finding employment. “I have one who graduated in May and is still searching for work and another who spent a year looking for work in their field and finally accepted a job that pays \$24,000 a year—which is not enough considering everyday expenses like housing, together with student loans.”

Josh Wilcox, who was chosen to be the media representative for the protesters, said Occupy Syracuse protest has been in place since October 4. Explaining why he was drawn to the movement, he said, “I had been in college for a year, the college cut back on resident assistants and I was let go. I had filed for financial aid, and unfortunately hadn’t enough to stay in school at one of the SUNY schools”.

“We stress that we are peaceful and nonviolent. We’re here to help the community and make changes not only on a national or international level, but trying to bring attention to local issues and proposals for stimulus and development.”

Josh sought to stress that the demonstration had a broad, apolitical base, including among the local government and the trade unions. “There has been a lot support from local organizations. The police department has been supportive, and we haven’t had any problems.”

When asked if there was any union or Democratic Party support, his response was, “a six-county union conglomeration gave an endorsement.” He stated further, “we do not endorse any political party or political candidate. We don’t use isms, like this ‘ism’ or that ‘ism’. This is really a movement to educate people of the injustices that are being committed by the corporations, and by our own government at times, to people.”

When asked about how connected they were to the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City, he answered, “We are in solidarity with them, though we are closer with other nearby Occupy protests. We came for Wall Street and are also looking for answers locally.”



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