

Ann Arbor: “End the influence of corporate money in politics”

8 October 2011

A crowd of at least 200 gathered on the central square of the University of Michigan’s Ann Arbor campus Thursday evening to support the growing protests against Wall Street. The event was held as a planning meeting, or general assembly, in preparation for upcoming demonstrations in Detroit and Lansing.

Students and young people aired grievances of unemployment and inequality. Residents spoke out against the running of the university as a business and the attack on nurses employed by the UM hospital system, which is currently in a dispute over health insurance and overtime pay.

Many participants who spoke to WSWS supporters said they had come alone or with friends and had no political affiliation to any groups. The event drew students and teachers from neighboring schools, including Wayne State University in Detroit and Saline High School.

Sam Bayerl, a second year General Studies student from nearby Washtenaw Community College, told the WSWS he had heard about and was following the development of the movement online. He said, “I wanted to come to support a movement to end the influence of corporate money in politics.”

Asked about what he thought should be done, Sam said, “They should repeal the law that makes corporations equal to people.” He also called for the end of the Federal Reserve. He said, “These issues deserve being discussed at a larger level.” He added, “Socialism has a bad rep. I wonder if that’s because the US system is against it.”

Katelynn Newcomb, a third year Law and Foreign Language student at Lansing Community College, said she came because “I wanted to find out about a movement that could be part of change.” She said, “It’s important to tell more people about what’s going on, to get more awareness.”

Organizers of the gathering laid out rules proscribing the criticism of other political tendencies, and sought to maintain an “apolitical” orientation to accommodate various radical and Democratic Party-oriented organizations. However, members of the International Students for Social Equality at UM and WSWS supporters distributed recent perspectives on the politics of the anti-Wall Street demonstrations (see “How to fight Wall Street” and “The political issues in the fight against Wall Street”) and were met with broad interest and openness toward socialism.

Addressing the crowd, Nicholas, an ISSE member and graduate student at UM, said, “When Wall Street’s greed caused a world financial crisis in 2008, governments around the world put up trillions of dollars to bail out the banks with no questions asked. Now, three years later, the debt incurred by these governments to prop up the financial aristocracy is again threatening the collapse of banks around the world, a new financial crisis, and a global depression.

“Governments of every stripe in every country have responded to this crisis with massive austerity, impoverishing and destroying the lives of millions in order to pay down the bad debts of the financial elite. It is clear that inherent in the current social and economic system is the mass impoverishment of millions of people in order to maintain the continued enrichment of the wealthy few.

“This system—in which it is the political consensus of the establishment that wages, benefits, education, health care, and anything that benefits the mass of society must be cut in order to defend the profits of the corporations and the bank—is capitalism.

“Capitalism, in which the wealth of society is

controlled and invested by the greedy few for their own personal enrichment, must be ended and replaced by a system of democratic, rational investment of society's wealth to meet need and to consciously and continually improve the living standards and well-being of people across the globe. Such a system is socialism.”

These remarks were repeatedly interrupted with cheers and applause.



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