

# With eviction threat looming, protesters mark one month of Occupy Detroit

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Occupy Detroit protesters marked the one-month anniversary of their encampment in a downtown park as city authorities made preparations to evict them in the coming days.

A tent city, which has been maintained in Grand Circus Park since mid-October, has been a focal point for protests against inequality and the corporate control over both political parties. The Democratic administration of Mayor David Bing—a multi-millionaire former auto parts executive—has made it clear it wants the protesters cleared out before next week's Thanksgiving Day parade, which will pass directly by the park.

With their 30-day permit expiring at 11:59 p.m. Monday night several representatives from Occupy Detroit attended a City Council meeting to appeal for a final two-week extension. In a statement that was cold comfort to protesters, City Council President Charles Pugh declared, "I assure you there will not be an incident tonight."

The council will reportedly vote on the request today.

Protesters appear divided over leaving the camp but arrangements have already been made to relocate to privately owned areas being donated by supporters. These reportedly include a downtown office space and a warehouse and 50-unit hotel in Southwest Detroit.

A spokesman for the group, Todd Brady, said, "The extension is on the council's agenda for tomorrow, but it is not clear that it will be approved. There is divided sentiment here. Some want to join the parade and other campers are done with the effort and want to move to privately-owned space."

Throughout the country, city governments—most run by Democratic administrations—have carried out police crackdowns, mass arrests and evictions against the Occupy movement. At the same time, the AFL-CIO

and Change to Win unions, while claiming support to the protests, have done everything to subordinate the movement to the Democratic Party and transform it into a harmless effort to reelect President Obama.

The effort to prevent any discussion of politics by many of the leaders of the Occupy movement, including those in various pseudo-left groups, has left it vulnerable to the effort to neuter and co-opt it. When WSWs reporters were at the camp on Monday afternoon, for example, two young people came to encourage Occupy participants to join a rally to back President Obama's bogus "jobs plan."

The rally is sponsored by the "Good Jobs Now," a coalition made up of the United Auto Workers, the Teamsters, the Service Employees International Union, the NAACP and other organizations aligned with the Democratic Party.

While this was generally accepted without criticism by many of those listening, WSWs reporters explained that this was an effort to channel opposition behind the Obama administration and smother the movement. This prompted serious political discussion about the nature of the Democratic Party, the trade unions and their support for the very capitalist system that protesters were opposing.

"The union leaders are not doing what they should," Todd said. "They are collaborating with the corporate owners. We distinguish between them and the workers in the unions who have come down to support us."

"We are concerned about co-optation. The Democrats and Republicans are both controlled by Wall Street. In the 1950s there was a 90 percent tax rate on the rich. But all the efforts to redistribute wealth have been unraveled. Wall Street controls the machine of government."

Jessica Dawl, who described herself as a recent

“college graduate in debt,” said, “It seems they are trying to shut the Occupy movement one city at a time. The police should leave us alone.” Jessica who used to live in nearby Highland Park commented on the decision of the utility giant DTE Energy to shut off streetlights because the impoverished city could not pay its bills. “They shut off the lights. It’s dark in the city.”

Joe Michnuk is a former employee of Detroit Media Project, the operator of the city’s two newspapers, the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*. “I was let go after working from 1987 to 2010 when they were reducing staff. I don’t vote because I’m disgusted with both parties. They are just there to keep the upper class on top and the rest of us where we are.”

Joe discussed the conclusion he and other workers had drawn about the Teamsters and other unions after the sellout of the bitter two-and-a-half year strike at the two Detroit newspapers in the mid-1990s. “They sent International Representatives to tell local workers what to accept. All they were concerned with was maintaining enough people to collect dues from. They even wanted to get the strike replacements to pay dues.

“The unions are nothing but a business—and their business is collecting dues, not representing the people.”



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