

Anti-Wall Street protesters in New York denounce “Governor 1 percent”

Our reporters
2 November 2011

Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York City scheduled a march to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s midtown Manhattan office on November 1 to demand the extension of the state’s so-called “millionaires’ tax” on those earning more than \$200,000 a year, which is scheduled to expire at the end of the year. The Democratic governor has insisted that he will not budge on his refusal to back an extension of the small tax surcharge.

Cuomo, unlike some other left-talking Democratic politicians, has made no attempt to hide his hostility to the Occupy protesters. In fact, as reported in the press and online media, the Governor suffered a rare defeat in a behind-the-scenes attempt to evict protesters from Academy Park in Albany, a short distance from his office.

The protesters, calling Cuomo “Governor 1 percent” and naming their Albany encampment of some 50 tents “Cuomoville,” have centered much of their fire on the demand for the millionaires’ tax. Apparently Cuomo demanded that Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, a longtime political ally, arrest those who remained in the park after an 11 pm curfew. Jennings told the NY Post, “Some of the governor’s people were pretty firm about our not doing this, letting them stay in the park, but basically, we had allowed this before...and my counsel said we’d be opening ourselves up to civil liability if we forced them out.” The Albany District Attorney said he wouldn’t prosecute demonstrators arrested by the Albany police.

Jennings and others have not become allies of the protesters in the fight against inequality. Their fear is that police action will backfire, especially in light of the growing anger over police repression in Oakland, California and elsewhere. District Attorney P. David Soares was quoted in the New York Times as follows:

“I expressed the view that if we engage, with all the colleges nearby, we could see the population triple, quadruple in a matter of hours. It would be a mistake to pre-emptively strike.”

In Manhattan’s Zuccotti Park, meanwhile, participants in the six-week occupation were preparing for colder weather. Tents were set up during the colder weather that preceded last weekend’s early snowstorm. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said, referring to Brookfield Properties, the real estate developer that owns the park, “unless Brookfield wants us to enforce a regulation that they have a right to impose, saying no tents, they can stay here.”

Of course that “permission” sets the stage for, and almost invites Brookfield to announce sometime in the near future, a decision that the tents are no longer allowed. Both “independent” Bloomberg and Democrat Cuomo, as well as Democrats and Republicans around the country, are utilizing a variety of tactics in the ongoing effort to squelch or tame the Occupy movement. The political establishment knows that this is only a pale reflection of the anger building up throughout the working class.

The WSWS spoke to participants at Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan.

Isabella Cassini, 25, a photographer from Los Angeles who is New York on a work assignment and used the opportunity to come to the park, said, “I support this movement. I realize that that they have not put forward any formal demands, but there is a general consensus on the need to end inequality.

“I do not believe that they took away the generators last week only because it is supposed to be a fire hazard. The people in power are really afraid of what this movement represents. They are afraid of the power that exists when people come together and what they

are capable of doing.

“What is happening in this country and around the world is very unfair. There is a big discrepancy between the people that are making \$50,000 and less and those who have millions and billions of dollars. In the US and all over the world there is this obscene inequality.

“The politicians are not speaking about the real issues that affect peoples’ welfare and ability to survive, which is being increasingly challenged. They want to talk about values like abortion and gay marriage.

“There is a very small difference between the two parties. But when it comes to bailing out Wall Street, there is no difference. All the politicians get paid by the special interests that include the companies, corporations and the lobbyists.

“I am a registered independent. The problem is that is that we continue to vote for the politicians who do not act in our best interests. I do not think that the Occupy Wall Street movement should be used for the Democratic Party, which represents the interests of big business. Most people in this country would not vote for the Democrats if there was a real third party that represents the interests of the people.”

Mary is a lawyer who lives in NYC who supports the movement and had came into the park for the first time, told the WWS, “I support this movement against the creeping corporate autocracy. The politicians make decisions based on the money that backs them. That is why the wealthy get all the bailouts. The government is not taking any steps to deal with climate change even though the environment is on the abyss.

“I was a big Obama supporter because he claimed that he was against the war in Iraq. I am exceedingly disappointed in him. I disagree with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The US government has more than 700 military bases around the world. They should all be eliminated. In Iraq, after the official troop pullout, Obama will still be keeping 20,000 private military contractors there.

“I am against the invasion of Libya. First we put them in or support these heads of state and then we take them out—literally. The US government claims to be on a moral high horse, but it kills whoever it wants to. It has no standing on moral or legal rights, as it claims it does. The government does not even follow its own constitution.

“Look at Guantanamo, where the government carries out kidnappings, torture and murder. A number have been killed in detention. It does it in violation of due process or any kind of legal process.”

Adrian Beirlair, a Deli worker in Pennsylvania, said, “This country was founded on unity, and that is why we are here. I work 40 hours a week and I have nothing to show for it.

“Occupy Wall Street raised about half a million dollars and they call us rich, but the U.S. government has existed for over 200 years and my mother, who has worked 25 years, can’t retire anything but tired and poor.

“Originally being a politician was not a career. People would have jobs, then hold office and go back to their jobs. Now they have never been part of the people.

“I don’t believe we will get across to the government but we will get to the rest of the 99 percent. The government is absolutely corrupt. We should take over the means of life. Why should billionaires have ten cars while people live in poverty? It is selfishness destroying this country. Community college should be free, someone could be a brilliant surgeon but if they can’t afford college it is a loss for everyone.

When asked if the occupation will last through the winter, Adrian replied, “It will either crumble or [the weather] will make this stronger.”

Tony Hernandez, a student at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, said “I come out here when I can. I wasn’t here this weekend and I wanted to hear what people were saying.

“I see a lot of support. I think the movement will continue and will last. It is keeping up a good pace but I don’t know what the next step is, maybe an organized demonstration across the country to push this forward.

“The goal, in my eye, is public awareness, to lead by example and have a presence in a huge change.”



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