The shutdown of Occupy Wall Street

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The Socialist Equality Party condemns the move by New York's multi-billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg, to forcefully shut down the occupation of Zuccotti Park in Manhattan early Tuesday.

The police raid is a blatant violation of basic democratic rights, including freedom of speech and assembly. The reasons for clearing out the protesters cited by Bloomberg, and parroted by the media and the entire political establishment, are nothing more than flimsy pretexts.

The American ruling class is once again demonstrating that it will not tolerate any opposition to its interests. The attack on the Occupy protesters makes clear that the defense of democratic rights is incompatible with the enormous levels of social inequality that sparked the Occupy movement itself.

The military-style police action in New York, involving hundreds of officers, was carefully coordinated with similar actions throughout the country. The mayors of major US cities, both Democrats and Republicans, have held meetings and conference calls to work out the best way to strangle the protests.

In the past week alone, police raids have been carried out in Portland, Oregon; Oakland and Berkeley, California; Denver, Colorado; St. Louis, Missouri and a number of other cities. Behind the scenes, local administrations were advised by the FBI and Obama's Department of Homeland Security.

The raids have involved an overwhelming mobilization of police, decked out in riot gear, employing tear gas and batons—or worse—against unarmed demonstrators. Since the movement began in Manhattan two months ago today, nearly 4,000 people have been arrested. Several of those arrested Tuesday morning are still being detained and have yet to be charged.

Through its own actions, the ruling class is demonstrating to millions of people that the state is not a neutral arbiter. It is *their state,* staffed by *their political representatives.* The interests and needs of the majority of the population have absolutely no effect on the course of government policy.

These conditions are not unique to the United States. The move to shut down Occupy Wall Street came the same week that Europe replaced two governments in an effort to more quickly push through massive austerity measures against overwhelming popular opposition. Mario Monti, a former executive at Goldman Sachs, has been installed in Italy, while Lucas Papademos, a former vice president of the European Central Bank, has been installed in Greece. Meanwhile, the ruling class of Britain has used new “total policing” methods to suppress and intimidate demonstrations by students against tuition hikes.

In the United States, the operation has involved all levels of government and both political parties. Many of the mayors ordering the most brutal raids are Democrats.

As for the Obama administration, it has remained virtually silent. On Tuesday, with Obama away in Asia, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney responded to a question about the New York raids by justifying the actions. “Freedom of assembly and freedom of speech,” he said, had to be “balanced” with “the very important need to maintain law and order and health and safety standards, which was obviously a concern in this case.”

The mass media, which functions as little more than a government appendage, has played its assigned role. The semi-fascistic fulminations of the *New York Post* and other right-wing publications have been joined by carefully placed articles in the liberal press aimed at justifying the repression. The *New York Times* on Wednesday editorialized that Bloomberg's actions were motivated by “legitimate worries” and were “justifiable

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legally.”

The Occupy demonstrations are an initial expression of popular anger over enormous levels of social inequality. Three years after the economic crisis that began in 2008—and nearly three years into the Obama administration—the conditions of life for millions of people are increasingly intolerable. The financial aristocracy has dictated policy, looted the country and restored its wealth to even higher levels. Now it is demanding unprecedented cuts in social programs.

Hatred of these conditions is broadly felt, and the Occupy protests have won the support of broad sections of the working class. Whatever the attempts by the media and the political establishment to pollute public opinion, mass sentiment is instinctively anti-capitalist and hostile to the giant banks and corporations.

A successful struggle against these conditions, however, depends on the independent political mobilization of the working class. No other social force can settle scores with American capitalism and all the ills that go with it—inequality, the destruction of democratic rights, and war.

The basic interests of the working class are incompatible with the capitalist system. It is not a matter of protesting to the powers that be, but of mobilizing the working class for the taking of political power and the reorganization of economic life to meet social needs, not private profit. This means a break with the capitalist two-party system and all those who work to channel opposition behind the Democratic Party.

It requires the nationalization of the banks and major corporations under the democratic control of the population. Wall Street must not simply be occupied, it must be expropriated, and the vast sums accumulated by the financial elite must be made available to meet pressing social needs in the United States and internationally.

The fundamental task is the building of a new political leadership that seeks to unify all of the struggles for jobs and decent living standards, in defense of democratic rights, and against war on the basis of a socialist program. The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading this fight. We urge all workers and youth seeking to carry forward the fight against Wall Street to study our program and join the SEP today.

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