

# Portland Occupy protests face heavy police intimidation

Julian Quinn

18 November 2011

Thousands of Portland residents marched through the downtown area on Thursday as part of nationwide Occupy demonstrations. By late afternoon the police, including mounted officers, transformed the peaceful protest, attacking the crowd with batons and pepper spray. An unknown number have been arrested, likely several dozen. By afternoon the city government had changed its story, calling the day's arrests "mostly peaceful."

According to OregonLive.com, "Tensions between officers and protesters began to rise about 4:25 p.m. when police warned protesters that anyone in the street would be arrested. A minute later police sprayed the crowd."

Police reacted to a planned Occupy march across the city's Steel Bridge by shutting it down. "We will not allow them to take a bridge and shut it down. It will not happen today," said a police spokesman. About 25 protesters were "peacefully arrested."

A day earlier, on Wednesday, students and faculty at Portland State University staged a walkout to begin their campaign to "Occupy PSU." They are calling for increased state funding for the university, lower and more equitable tuition, modifications to student loan debts, and higher pay for faculty and staff.

Portland State University, the largest in the state's university system, receives only 16 percent of its funding from the state, the rest coming from tuition, fees and donations. Faculty at PSU are some of the lowest paid members of the profession in the United States.

Occupy PSU's call for the walkout stated, "As we have grown up, the American Dream has told us to 'work hard, play by the rules, and go to college,' but the dream has become a nightmare because it no longer

offers the prosperity that it provided to some of our role-models, neighbors, or family members. Instead, it now promises likely unemployment, tens of thousands of dollars in debt, feeding oneself with food stamps, and returning to live with our families."

The new student protests came after the eviction of the Occupy Portland demonstrators in a police offensive early Sunday morning. The downtown square that had been occupied was closed to the public and about 50 demonstrators were arrested. Due to the large numbers of people who came to protect the Occupy camp, it took the police about nine hours to clear it.

The police, having apparently learned their lesson, were out in force on the day of the student rally and march. While no official estimates were made, this reporter counted about 100 police officers escorting the marchers to the location of their general assembly at PSU's Urban Center, many dressed in riot gear. At least eight police officers mounted on horseback, a serious crowd control measure, were also present.

Several hundred students and faculty walked out of their classes and were joined by other supporters as they marched through downtown. At one point, the march was blocked by a wall of police officers who would not let the marchers cross the street on the crosswalk. According to one demonstrator: "all of a sudden, the cops assembled right in front of us and started pushing us and telling us that we cannot cross the sidewalk."

One man was arrested as he attempted to do so, and has been charged with two counts of harassment and one count of interfering with a police officer. Afterwards, the marchers changed the march course and reached their destination.

The crowd appeared to have reached its maximum by the time it arrived at the PSU Urban Center and began

its general assembly.

After their eviction from downtown Portland, members of Occupy Portland have considered moving to the Park Blocks on the university campus. An open letter from the university's vice president to the students warned that camping is prohibited on city and university property and that they should listen to and comply with police. "If you fail to do these things, you are likely to be arrested," the letter states.

Another unknown individual was arrested later in the day for attempting to enter a university building on lockdown.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**