

The police attack at UC Davis: The working class and the defense of democratic rights

Statement International Students for Social Equality
21 November 2011

Friday's assault by University of California Davis police on a peaceful protest is an outrageous act of violence and intimidation. It is part of a nationwide wave of police repression against the Occupy movement, and a byproduct of the drive by university officials and big business politicians to enforce attacks on public education over the opposition of workers and students.

On Friday afternoon, a UC Davis police officer—later identified as Lt. John Pike—pepper sprayed the faces of a dozen protesters sitting on the ground with arms linked, sending two to the hospital. Horrified onlookers pleaded with the officer to stop attacking the students, and chanted “shame on you” as the officer carried out the attack.

The attempt over the weekend by UC Davis Chancellor Linda Katehi to distance herself from the violence is a fraud, as is the “investigation” she has launched. The police were acting under the orders of the chancellor, who sent out a letter Friday warning students of police action, claiming, absurdly, that this was necessary so that students “could learn and work in a safe, secure environment without disruption.”

The police crackdown in Davis takes place within the context of a nationwide assault on public education, supported by both parties, and conducted in California under the leadership of Democratic Governor Jerry Brown. Responding to Brown's budget cuts, UC and CSU regents are implementing or planning another round of sharp tuition increases that will make public education unaffordable for tens of thousands more working-class students.

The attack on peaceful student protesters at UC Davis is also part of a coordinated effort by mayors of major US cities—both Democrats and Republicans—to shut down Occupy protests through violence.

Police have used truncheons against peaceful students at UC Berkeley and tear gas and rubber bullets against demonstrators in Oakland. Last week, police cleared out Occupy Wall Street in a military-style operation. Throughout the country, nearly 4,000 people have been arrested for seeking to exercise their basic democratic rights.

Increasingly, dissent is criminalized in the United States. This is in a country that regularly uses “democratic” pretenses to invade countries and kill thousands of civilians. Had these events occurred overseas, in Iran or Syria, they would have been denounced by the media and both parties.

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

Break with the Democrats and Republicans!

Despite feigning sympathy for the occupy protesters, the Democratic Party, headed by the Obama administration, has overseen and orchestrated the wave of police attacks on Occupy protestors. This is entirely consistent with the policies of the administration as a whole.

Under the supervision of Obama, the super-rich have gotten wealthier than ever. The government has given the financial parasites everything they wanted, while carrying out unprecedented attacks on public education and social services. The Democrats serve the banks, not working people.

Workers and students must not allow the movement against social inequality to be turned into a reelection campaigns for the Democrats, who will only carry out

more attacks!

Mobilize the working class in the fight for socialism!

The defense of public education cannot be waged on one campus or in the university system as a whole. The destruction of education—including rising tuition, the shutting down of schools and the attack on the jobs and wages of teachers—is only one part of a wholesale attack on every social right of the working class.

A successful struggle against this attack depends on the independent political mobilization of the working class, in the United States and internationally. 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.

A new generation is coming to understand that change is only possible through the revolutionary mobilization of the working class in the fight for socialism. It is not a question of “occupying” Wall Street, but of abolishing it through the transformation of the giant banks and corporations into democratically controlled entities run on the basis of social need, not private profit.

A new political party of the working class must be built, a party that aims to take political power away from the corporations and banks and transform society on the basis of genuine social equality. With its batons and tear gas canisters—and worse to come—the ruling class is itself refuting the idea that the rights of workers can be achieved in any other way.

Take up the fight for socialism! Join the International Students for Social Equality!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact