

Occupy UC Davis protesters adopt resolution calling for break with Democratic Party

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On Tuesday evening, the general assembly of Occupy UC Davis passed a resolution denouncing the attack on UC Davis students and calling for a break with the Democratic Party and construction of an independent social and political movement of the entire working class.

The resolution, the first of its kind adopted at an Occupy protest, lays out a clear political perspective to counter the growing attacks on protests against inequality in the United States. It comes a week and a half after the brutal pepper spraying of unarmed students protesting against rising tuition and inequality.

The attack on UC Davis students is part of a nationwide crackdown on Occupy demonstrators, organized by both Democrats and Republicans and overseen by the Obama administration. On Wednesday morning, police in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, both controlled by Democratic Party mayors, cleared out encampments. (See “Police attack Occupy camps in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, arresting 350”)

The resolution at UC Davis was adopted by about 70 students participating in the general assembly. It was presented by Eric Lee, a supporter of the International Students for Social Equality and member of a newly-formed committee established to mobilize broader support in the working class.

In addition to calling for a break with the Democratic Party and a turn to the working class, the resolution stresses the international character of the attack on workers and youth and condemns the hypocritical posturing of American imperialism as a defender of democratic rights.

The resolution reads in full:

We, the students of UC Davis, condemn the brutal police assault and pepper spraying of fellow students, who were peacefully protesting on November 18.

This attack is part of a nationwide—in fact global—crackdown on demonstrations against social inequality and the domination of politics by the rich. While the American government invokes “democratic rights” to justify wars abroad, it responds to social protests at home with riot police, tear gas and rubber bullets.

While Chancellor Linda Katehi is directly responsible for the police raid, she was enforcing a nationwide campaign orchestrated by the entire political establishment. Throughout the country, Democratic and Republican politicians—including the Brown and Obama administrations—are dismantling public education, cutting social services, and undermining all our basic social and democratic rights. Some of the most brutal attacks on Occupy demonstrations have been carried out by Democratic Party mayors.

The way forward is clear: No support should be given to either of the two parties! The dictates of the banks and corporations can be countered only through the independent social and political struggle of the entire working class.

We call upon students and working people all over the world to support our struggle against budget cuts. Our fight is your fight! Right now, students and workers in Greece, England and Egypt are engaged in a common struggle.

The global protests that began in 2011 must be

expanded to a mass movement of students and workers to defend our rights and finally put an end to the domination by the corporations and super-rich over political and economic life.

At the assembly, the only objection raised was a concern that addressing the wider problems would lead to a lack of focus on the local and immediate role that Chancellor Katehi played in the police assault on students November 18. The general assembly overall felt that the line ascribing direct responsibility to Katehi sufficiently addressed that concern.

“This is an important resolution—I’m glad it passed,” Lee said. “There are many political questions that have to be tackled if the protests against inequality are to be driven forward. There are definite efforts by the trade unions and other political forces to channel mass anger behind the Democratic Party in one form or another. There is a real danger that opposition will be co-opted or will disintegrate into shallow protest politics. This is only the beginning of an effort to fight for a fundamentally different political perspective.”

The United Auto Workers (UAW), which has unionized graduate students at UC Davis and other campuses, has been involved in conference calls with organizers at UC Davis and helped coordinate a protest of the UC Regents meeting on Monday. The protest was turned into a question and answer session with the “student regent” and successfully diffused. The Regents unanimously passed a budget that will lead to sharp tuition hikes.

In the wake of demonstrations on Monday, the Occupy Davis general assembly has focused much of its attention on the occupation of Dutton Hall, an administrative building on campus. The assembly approved a set of three limited demands, including the immediate resignation of Chancellor Katehi, the reform of the campus police, and a halt to fee increases.

These demands have also been supported by UAW Local 2865. The leadership of the local has recently passed into the hands of a “progressive” faction—the Academic Workers for a Democratic Union—but this has not altered its orientation to the Democratic Party. Their reformist coalition, called “Refund California,” asks the Regents and Chancellor Katehi to sign a pledge to support higher education by backing several Democratic Party measures.

In earlier discussions of the general assembly,

supporters of the ISSE raised the objection that without political clarification, an occupation of the hall could easily become channeled into a protest directed at the UC administration and the Democratic Party.

The author also recommends:

Unite the working class to defend public education and democratic rights!

Statement of the International Students for Social Equality

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