

Occupy Pittsburgh ordered to empty camp

Samuel Davidson
12 December 2011

Members of Occupy Pittsburgh have been ordered to leave and remove all their tents and belongings from the park that they have been occupying since October 15.

Protesters were informed Friday evening that they would have until noon on Sunday to remove all their tents, other structures, and all personal belongings from Mellon Green; those that did not would be considered trespassers.

The public park is owned by BNY Mellon, which had not sought to evict the protesters up to now. On Friday the company issued an absurd statement, citing concerns for the health of protesters and said that they must go. In reality, the eviction is being organized by the Democratic Party, which controls both the mayor's office and the city council in Pittsburgh.

The eviction of Occupy Pittsburgh is part of a national effort, being coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security and the Obama Administration to close the camps throughout the country.

On Sunday, as the noon deadline approached, Occupy Pittsburgh protesters and their supporters gathered at the park to clean and winterize their camp. Several, who could not risk arrest, took down their tents. The majority of protesters, however, decided to stay.

There was no noticeable concentration of police, but protesters expected the police to either move in after dark or to wait for a court order. BNY Mellon is seeking a court injunction ordering the protesters to leave. A hearing has been set for 12 on Monday.

In their statement, BNY Mellon cited concern for protesters getting hypothermia and using propane

heaters inside tents. Protesters responded by pointing out that there have not been any cases of hypothermia and that since BNY Mellon delivered guidelines for using the park several weeks ago, space heaters and other open flames have not been used.

On Sunday, protesters further winterized the site with the erection of a large winterized tent, the removal of leaves, straw and other litter while others created walkways with sheets of plywood.

A working nurse who asked that her name not be used said that she thought the decision to close the camp was part of a national effort to close down the Occupy movement.

“The people here are all abiding the law and they have a great system for taking care of each other,” she said. “We knew this was coming, they don't want this movement to take hold. People are sick of what is taking place in this country and want something done.”

Speaking on why she is supporting this movement, she explained that, in her job as a nurse, “I have seen enough patients while visiting them in their homes to know that there is a lot of suffering in this country. When is it going to end?”

“There are people working in the health-care field who do not get good benefits. Why are there not enough aids in nursing homes so that patients don't have to lie around in soiled clothing? In a country as wealthy as ours, why should there be people without the basic necessities of life?”

Mark Mancini, a supporter of the Occupy Movement said, “It is a great injustice. BNY Mellon is trying to prevent the people from voicing their opposition to

their [BNY Mellon's] policies.

“The Democrats and Republicans serve the people they represent, and that is big business. Both political parties are one party, and that is the party of big business. They each just represent a different group of investors.

“Anytime there is a movement to challenge big business, both parties are going to do everything to stop it.”

Weenta Girmay and Ben Frazier had come down to help their friend Miranda Holman pack up and move her things.

Miranda explained that she was sleeping in a friend's tent. “I was arrested in Washington DC last week and I was made to stand in the rain for eight hours. I am afraid that if something like that happens again, I will get pneumonia.

“This is really sad. We were all set to stay the winter and we really wanted to. We thought if we could stay the winter that it would show everyone how serious we were about standing up for people's rights.

“This movement shows the power of the people and they don't want that to happen.”

Weenta said, “I came to support my friend. I think these are all very valid issues. There are people who have taken all their vacation for the year so they could be here for ten days. [And there are] people who have left their jobs because they are upset about those jobs and what is happening here.”

Ben pointed out that it was interesting that the protesters were being forced to leave now, when they had been allowed to stay so long. “They see that camps are being knocked down in other places and they feel that they can do it here as well.”

Ben agreed that the Obama administration wanted these protests removed as the elections began. “I voted for Obama, but I feel that he has not stood up for what he said he would.”



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact