

Oakland proposes anti-protest measure after police crackdown

David Brown
8 February 2012

On January 30, over 400 Occupy protesters were arrested in downtown Oakland. It was the largest set of arrests as part of the Occupy protests since over 700 occupiers were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge last October. Emboldened by this success, the city's Democratic Party establishment is preparing to go on the offensive.

The City Council will decide this week on a proposal from Councilman Ignacio de la Fuente that would direct the Oakland Police Department to take a zero tolerance approach to any infractions of current laws regarding protests.

Fuente specifically cited blocking the street and gathering without a permit as examples of minor infractions that the police should enforce without exception.

Several months ago, Fuente made a similar proposal to his current one, hoping to nip the Occupy movement in the bud by increasing police repression. However, it was voted down. Fuente told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that following the recent mass arrests, he believes the council will be more likely to support him.

"The fact is we cannot allow these protests to continue to drain our resources," he told the *Chronicle*. "We should have been doing this a long time ago." He further demonstrated his contempt for political expression by saying protests should be planned like Chinese New Year parades or Cinco de Mayo festivals.

Fuente's distaste for the Occupy protests has been honed during his long career as a trade union bureaucrat and Democratic Party politician. Since 1983 Fuente has been an International Vice President of the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics & Allied Workers International Union, AFL-CIO. In 1992 he was first elected to the Oakland City Council as a Democrat and has been reelected ever since. He is currently serving as

vice mayor, and was until January 2009 the president of the city council.

Regardless of whether the resolution passes, the arrests on January 30 mark a definite shift in police enforcement tactics. Of the 400 people arrested, only twelve have been charged with a crime. Eleven of those people were only charged with the misdemeanor of "blocking a sidewalk." This clearly shows that the purpose of these arrests was not to prevent vandalism or protect public safety, but to intimidate protesters.

At a rally on Monday to protest the arrests and support those charged, the police confiscated the protesters speaker system, even after it was turned off. They said they were responding to noise complaints from local businesses, and that the protesters did not have a permit.

Nationwide the police are feeling more confident that they can harass Occupy protesters with impunity. The police raided the Occupy DC encampment last Sunday, making 11 arrests, on the basis of enforcing the park's rule against overnight camping.

Most ominously for protesters, and the working class as a whole, the political establishment is increasingly describing their actions as "terrorism." Fuente called the Occupy Oakland attempts to occupy an abandoned building "an escalation that in my opinion basically amounts to domestic terrorism." Monday's rally drew a small group of counter demonstrators called "Stand for Oakland" making a similar claim.

In Stand for Oakland's call to protest the Occupy Movement, they demanded an end to "the vandalizing and terrorizing of our city." One of the prominent voices of Stand for Oakland is Marilyn Singleton, the Republican candidate for congress in California's 13th district.

Other prominent members of Stand for Oakland are

Democratic Party Councilwoman Desley Brooks, Oakland Chamber of Commerce official Paul Junge, and developer Phil Tagami, who is best known for patrolling his building near the city hall with a shotgun during prior protests.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact