

Hands off anti-Wall Street protesters

Jerry White, Socialist Equality Party candidate for US president
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Last month the FBI launched a series of raids at the homes of anti-Wall Street protesters in Portland, Oregon and Seattle and Olympia, Washington. As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, I emphatically condemn these police state actions against peaceful protesters and demand an end to the Obama administration's campaign of political persecution and repression against these individuals and groups.

The early-morning invasions—barely reported in the news media—involved as many as 80 heavily armed “domestic terrorism” agents who used stun grenades and battering rams to smash through doors, pull their unsuspecting victims from their beds and terrorize them with automatic weapons.

Underscoring the political character of the raids, the FBI agents confiscated computers, political literature, cell phones, thumb drives, and various pieces of clothing bearing political slogans. A warrant left behind in the home of one of the victims indicates the agents were seeking, among other items, “anti-government or anarchist literature or material.”

Those targeted are guilty of nothing more than participating in protests organized by the Occupy movement. The FBI has not even revealed what the trumped-up charges are and the indictments remain sealed. One can only conclude that for the Obama administration, possession of “anti-government literature or material” is now being considered evidence of criminal activity or “terrorism.”

This has enormous implications for basic democratic rights. The administration is criminalizing political dissent and employing its political police to intimidate and silence any and all opposition to the financial aristocracy that rules America.

It is not for nothing that the FBI has long been known as America's Gestapo. After the Russian Revolution, the FBI regularly framed up, arrested and killed socialists, labor organizers and left-wing militants. In

the 1960s and 1970s, the FBI's notorious COINTELPRO operation spied on, launched provocations and employed deadly violence against the civil rights, anti-war and socialist movements.

The Oregon and Washington raids are the latest in a series of similar acts carried out in flagrant violation of the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. In September 2010, the administration ordered raids on the homes of leaders of the Anti-War Committee (AWC) and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) in Minneapolis and Chicago, and subpoenaed 23 people to testify before grand juries. The Obama administration justified raids using the “material support for terrorism” provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act.

In the period leading up to the recent NATO protests in Chicago in May, similar trumped-up “terror” charges were leveled against three young anti-war protesters. Also in May, five young men described as “anarchists” were ensnared in a so-called “terrorist plot” in Cleveland, Ohio. The so-called terror plots in both cities involved undercover provocateurs, which infiltrated protest organizations and encouraged violence.

Throughout the US over the last year, Occupy Wall Street activists and other protesters faced police repression, including on the campus of University of California-Davis where campus police fired pepper spray into the faces of students opposed to tuition increases.

As the SEP long ago warned, the anti-democratic measures implemented in the name of the bogus “war on terror”—military tribunals, indefinite detention, the suspension of due process and other constitutional rights for “enemy combatants,” the pseudo-legal justifications for torture and assassination, including America citizens—would be used to attack political dissent in the US itself.

Wherever they were employed, these repressive

measures were never aimed at protecting the American people. The fact that the US is openly allied with al Qaeda to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria and install an American-backed puppet regime underscores the fraudulent character of the “war on terror.” From the beginning it was used to justify the US invasion and occupation of oil rich regions and to deal with the inevitably opposition to its criminal policies at home as well.

New plans for mass repression are already in the making for the Democratic and Republican conventions scheduled for later this summer. Officials in Charlotte, North Carolina—where the Democratic national convention will be held next month—have been given \$50 million in federal funds for concrete barriers, 9-foot-high steel fences, more police, equipment and training. The police department—which says it is prepared for “agitators,” has spent a year training in crowd control, including sending 100 cops to help crack down on protests in Chicago during the anti-NATO demonstrations.

The authorities in Tampa, Florida—the site of the Republican national convention—also received \$50 million in federal funds for security and will bring in more than 3,000 officers from 59 law enforcement agencies from across the state, along with Florida National Guard troops, to patrol the streets.

The American ruling class is well aware of the deep popular hostility to the massive redistribution of wealth to the top that has occurred, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 Wall Street crash. Workers and young people look with hostility to the entire bought-and-paid-for political establishment—and the two millionaire presidential candidates, Obama and Romney. The ruling elite knows that sooner rather than later social opposition will erupt against the social inequality and the unrelenting attacks on jobs, living standards and social programs.

This is not just an American phenomenon. Throughout Europe repressive measures are being put in place in response to mass opposition to the austerity measures being imposed by the international bankers. In Britain, authorities locked down London during the just-concluded Olympic games, and put on an unprecedented show of military and paramilitary force, including stationing missile batteries on rooftops and floating naval ships past working class neighborhoods.

This demonstrates that the defense of basic democratic rights is incompatible with the capitalist system and the continued rule of a super-wealthy minority whose policies of austerity, wage cuts and war are completely antithetical to the interests of the overwhelming majority of society.

That is why the Socialist Equality Party is fighting in our election campaign for the working class to build its own mass political party whose aim is to establish a workers’ government and break the political and economic stranglehold of the financial aristocracy through the socialist reorganization of society. Only in this way can genuine democracy and social equality be achieved.



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