

From Occupation to Expropriation

Build on the Anarchist and Revolutionary Potentialities of the Occupy Wall Street Movement.

First of May Anarchist Alliance

October 10, 2011

1. The ongoing Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, encampment, and related actions around the country are a significant development. These events may well be the beginning of a 1960s style movement of great potential. Because of its focus on the economic crisis, the financial/corporate shenanigans that contributed to it, and, most important, jobs, the movement has the potential to strike a resonant chord in the hearts of millions of people who have been slammed by the events of the last few years and who are aching to do something about them. This is particularly true of those who have lost their homes and/or their jobs, as well as those who have little prospect of finding work.
2. The Occupy Wall Street movement, like the movement of the 60s in its early stages, is anarchistic, that is, unconsciously anarchist in how it is structured and what its underlying goals are, in spite of the liberal populism of its rhetoric and explicit demands. The key question is: Will the movement be corralled by liberal, reformist, or authoritarian forces or will it develop in a self-consciously revolutionary and anarchist direction? The example of the 60s, in which the radical wing of the movement abandoned its original libertarian principles and embraced an array of authoritarian Marxist-Leninist politics, is instructive here. We must do our best to make sure something like that does not happen again.
3. Consequently, we believe it is crucial for all anarchists to participate in this movement and work to build it. We also think it is essential that we explicitly propagandize and organize for both anarchist methods of struggle and for an anti-authoritarian social vision/program. We urge all of our groupings, formal and informal, while remaining free to experiment in these matters, to recognize the need for some degree of ongoing coordination and, at critical moments, the effective concentration of our forces. Weakness and disorganization in this respect will allow important events and possibilities to pass us by as well as allow attacks on the autonomy of the movement to go unanswered.
4. We should defend the movement's aim to be as broad and as deep as possible, to reach out to individuals of all classes, while we concentrate on drawing in workers, people of

color, and poor people, generally. We want to educate everybody about the strategic importance of building a movement concentrated in the working class. Toward this end, we welcome the participation of several major unions in the protests. Their presence helps to legitimize the occupation among wider layers of people and brings unionized workers into direct contact with others in the fight for justice and an alternative society. We support bringing those unions of which we are members into the struggle as one way of getting our co-workers involved. But we also need to highlight the danger that labor's bureaucratic/reformist apparatuses will attempt to chain the movement to their political purposes, which are contrary to the spirit and aims of the Occupy Wall Street movement. We must be both creative and energetic in our efforts to foment a subversive consciousness among participants in the movement, and to generate independent organization and radical action by the workers themselves, both inside and outside the union structures.

5. One of the strengths of the movement at present is its concentration on direct action. We should work to ensure that the movement retains this focus: demonstrations, occupations, and strikes, up to and including city-wide, state-wide, and national general strikes. These must remain the movement's tactics of choice. We also need to struggle to turn the general distrust of and disgust with capitalist politics and politicians into a full-blown recognition that both the Democratic and Republican parties are controlled by, and beholden to, corporate interests, and are therefore our enemies.
6. Finally, we should strive to convince the movement that the problem in the US today is not just Wall Street or the corporations or the fact that the economic system is somehow being "gamed" or "rigged" by tricky selfish individuals. We need to explain that the cause of the crisis is the capitalist system itself, a system in which production is carried on only when it results in profits, the vast majority of which go to the tiny elite that runs the country. Correspondingly, we should work to persuade the movement that its ultimate aim should be the radical democratization of our entire society, in other words, a revolution in which the vast majority of people seize control of the economy and the country as a whole from the rich and disperse power and direct control of all aspects of social life as widely as possible. As a result, we should propose and support radical demands that both point in this direction and unite the broadest sectors of the population.

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