

## Occupy Movement

Recently I learned that my theory about the Occupy movement originating from a few beer drinkers in a nearby Greenwich Village barroom was inaccurate. The initial idea emerged from a printing in “Adbuster” located in Vancouver, British Columbia. The text promoted: “What is our demand? Occupy Wall Street on September 17. Bring tent and essential survival material.”

More than 150 people showed up, meeting in Zuccotti Park on lower Broadway. Since electronic amplification was prohibited, they created a new system of amplifying speeches. Nearby listeners to a speaker repeated each sentence in unison. The next group behind them then repeated the sentence.

After that first Occupy movement, numerous meetings spreading through the nation did the same thing when electronic amplification was prohibited. The typical pattern of communication at Occupy movements is that anyone can get up and speak, but must first give their name to the stack keeper, who later calls each person on the list.

When an Occupy individual is asked the purpose of the movement, the typical response is: “Right now, we’re building a national movement. In time, we will become more focused and specific.”

The Zuccotti Park protesters certainly did not act or dress like the masked anarchists at 1999’s World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. It was a mix of peaceful students and young activists, with very few cultural or political radicals.

The typical movement is open to new members at all times. The Wall Street demonstrators were supported by donations of food, money, and service through a website: <http://occupywallst.org>. Supporters could donate money, laundry, showers if they lived nearby, and food from places such as Panivil and Co. on lower Broadway.

Within two months, the Occupy virus infected numerous locales, primarily large cities, but also smaller towns. Apparently much of the Deep South has been immunized to the virus. The Occupy virus has infected over 350 cities, including 44 in California, 12 in Indiana, 11 in Maine, and 6 in Kentucky.

There have been several in our state, Oregon. In Portland, the movement has been one of the largest in the nation. Here, occupiers have encamped for weeks in two downtown parks. Both sites attracted a large number of homeless, and some of our homeless mentally ill patients. After weeks of dynamic demonstrations through downtown streets, the city government issued a deadline for evacuation. As the deadline approached, several thousand supporters, including my son Carl, prevented the police from removing the occupiers. Only during the next morning at 5 or 6 a.m., after the crowd dispersed, did the police proceed to remove all occupiers and their remaining possessions. They then surrounded the parks with sturdy wire fences. The movement is now seeking a large

warehouse type of building to re-occupy downtown. They still organize at least one demonstration per week.

What prompted occupiers to follow the international movements and change the very nature of their nation? The countless signs appearing at campsites and demonstrations support numerous causes which moved American youth to break out of their long term lethargic state. The major causes which instigated our national uprisings were enormous inequities between the masses and the super-rich, plus the control of our national government by corporate powers. Occupiers call themselves the 99 percenters. Frequent signs such as, "We are the 99 percent," dominate in demonstrations. The top one percent control 40 percent of our national wealth and have almost total control of the national government.

Other signs display specific reasons for protesting—loss of job, enormous college debts, homelessness, hunger, and frustrations with both political parties.

According to national polls, the Occupy movement obtains majority public approval. The public has been positively impressed by the peaceful nature of activities. Each Occupy movement has similar qualities, such as total freedom of expression, unlike most political groups which have recognized leaders. Occupiers have committees for food collection and service, public relations, legal counsel, security groups, medical help from volunteer nurses and doctors, outreach groups, media groups, and the stack keeper who is the gate keeper. The stack keeper acts as the MC at meetings. He or she has the right to give preference to handicapped individuals, women, or racial minorities. Outside visitors can sign up to speak. Most Occupy movements have two general-assembly planning meetings each day. All decisions are made by consensus.

Political pundits seem perplexed by the nature of the movement. We are conditioned to expect leaders to guide us. They also complain about the lack of specific goals. Through unions, liberals and progressives support the movement, and they want them to promote specific economic and political goals. Yet the occupiers continue their radical but peaceful anarchistic ideal democracy, where each individual has an equal voice.

Our present type of democracy is a force because it is controlled by corporate wealth. Real democracy is often messy and discordant and it's often difficult to make decisions. Dictatorship is the ideal efficient type of government.

The Occupy movement is a lively organic entity. No one knows precisely where it is headed. On the other hand the Republicans know exactly where they want to go politically—almost as efficient as a dictatorship. The Democratic party, through posing as the voice of the American masses, is really a tool of the corporate world. Since [Congress] too is a broken democratic institution, it will take more than a minority of idealistic congressmen to make major changes in our national government.

Thus far, the Occupy movement has avoided committing to the Democratic Party. It has two logical roads to success. It can pledge to have all movement members become active

on local levels and eventually take over the national [Democratic Party] organization, somewhat as the Tea Party movement is working in the Republican Party.

Or it can become a viable third party. That road will be rocky and probably lead to a temporary victory for the Republican Party. If the Occupy movement could maintain its third-party goal, it would take about ten or twelve years to replace and rename the Democratic Party as the Independent Democratic Party.

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