

'Occupy' Movement

Does the protest against inequality have staying power?

Demonstrators protesting income inequality and corporate greed have taken over parks and other public places across the country in the wake of the Occupy Wall Street protest launched in September near New York City's Financial District. Police have shut down many camps following mass arrests, occasional violence and heavy-handed police tactics, including in New York and Oakland, Calif. Still, while top Republicans have condemned the protesters as divisive and dangerous, some Democratic politicians have voiced sympathy for their message. The movement's main claim — that the U.S. political and economic system benefits the richest 1 percent to the detriment of the other 99 percent — has put the issue of economic fairness front and center in the presidential race. But the Occupy movement faces a long, cold winter and a pair of daunting challenges: defining its long-term goals and forming a leadership structure that can chart a sustainable course for the protest effort.



Occupy Wall Street activists demonstrate against income inequality and corporate greed on Oct. 11, 2011, in the Upper East Side Manhattan neighborhood of News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch, oil tycoon David Koch and other affluent Americans.

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'Occupy' Movement

BY PETER KATEL

THE ISSUES

When hundreds of demonstrators suddenly appeared in New York's Financial District last September — along with their tents, sleeping bags and drums — their “1 percent v. 99 percent” buzz-phrase decrying economic inequality caught on immediately.

But sympathizers and critics did have some questions: What did the protesters want to happen? What did they want government to do? Some thought the campers would quickly give up and disperse.

The Occupy Wall Street activists held their ground, however, and the movement grew in strength. And its objectives became a little clearer.

“People are coming out here to voice, you know, their disapproval with the system and to voice themselves in a direct, democratic fashion,” said Patrick Bruner, a 23-year-old from Brooklyn. “It’s really refreshing for people to think that they can effect change in this system that has essentially made it so that only 1 percent of the population are citizens.”¹

The New York encampment in Zuccotti Park was the seed from which hundreds of Occupy movements sprouted in cities, towns and college campuses across the country. From one coast to the other, activists spoke in similar tones, often with drum circles pounding in the background. “I believe that I am not represented by the big interest groups and the big money corporations, which have increasing control of our money and our politics,” Elise Whitaker, 21, a freelance script editor and film director,



AFP/Getty Images/Robyn Beck

An Occupy protester in Los Angeles on Nov. 5, 2011, urges people to move their money from large banks into small banks or credit unions. “I believe that I am not represented by the big interest groups and the big-money corporations, which have increasing control of our money and our politics,” said an activist.

said at the Occupy Los Angeles site at City Hall Park. Demonstrators want “a more equal economy,” she said.²

Mayors of Los Angeles, New York and other cities sent police to break up encampments. Winter weather or declining political momentum did in some others, though Occupy Washington was still going in early 2012. And other Occupy groups, including the original New York movement, were still holding meetings as well, though not in a round-the-clock encampment.³ In addition, the most engaged activists are meeting face-to-face and on the Web, and a major revival of a street presence in the spring seems virtually certain.⁴ Already, the movement’s image of a country divided between the “1 percent” and the “99 percent” has forced politicians from President

Obama on down to confront economic inequality.

“For years, people were saying, ‘When are the pitchforks going to come out? When are people are going to get mad?’ But no one was doing anything,” says Ken Margolies, director of organizing programs at Cornell University’s Industrial Labor Relations School. “The Occupy movement caught the imagination of the country.”

The occupiers’ message was soon buttressed by studies charting substantial income growth for Americans at the top, and relatively meager growth for everyone else.⁵ (See graph, p. 29.)

Weeks after the Occupy movement took off, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that from 1979 to 2007 the highest-income 1 percent of the population saw after-tax household income grow 277 percent. By contrast, for the 60 percent of the population in the middle, incomes grew less than 40 percent.⁶

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a policy think tank for industrialized nations, reported that the richest 1 percent of Americans took in 20 percent of national income — a bigger share than in any other industrialized country examined.⁷

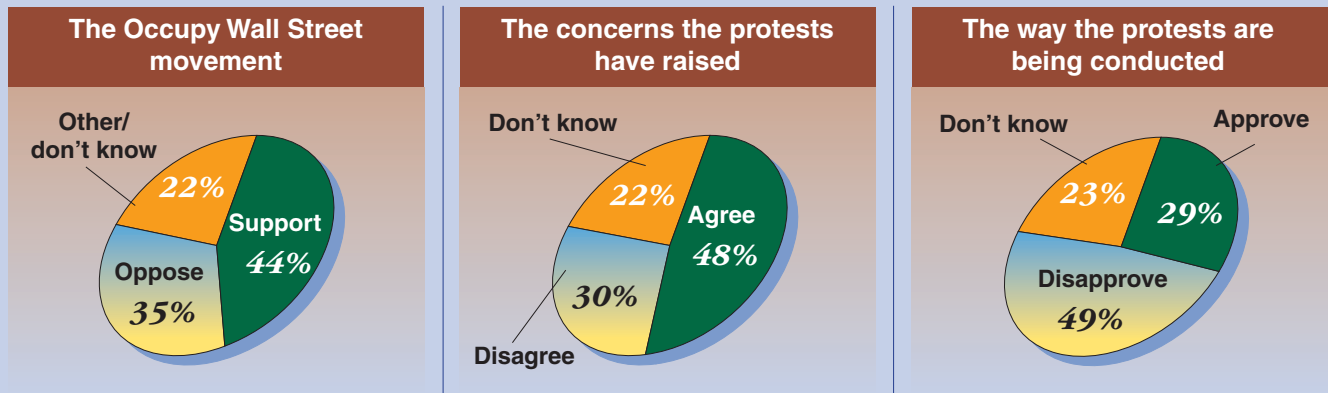
Meanwhile, according to a survey released Jan. 11, 2012, by the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of Americans see “strong conflicts” between rich and poor in the United States, indicating the income inequality message from Democrats and the Occupy movement is seeping into the national consciousness.⁸

The Occupy movement signifies refusal to accept more of the same.

Public Backs Occupy's Concerns, Rejects Tactics

Forty-four percent of Americans support the Occupy Wall Street movement while about half agree with the concerns the protests have raised. A similar percentage, however, disapproves of the movement's tactics, such as staging sit-ins in public places.

Public Views of Occupy Wall Street



* Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Source: "Frustration With Congress Could Hurt Republican Incumbents," Pew Research Center, December 2011, p. 3, [www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/12-15-11 Congress and Economy release.pdf](http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/12-15-11%20Congress%20and%20Economy%20release.pdf)

Until it appeared, says Rory McVeigh, director of the Center for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Notre Dame, "The conservative side has been pretty effective in managing public opinion in a way that gets people worried about debt reduction and not really thinking about consequences of joblessness and inequality and stimulating the economy."

Left-wing activists have driven the movement from the beginning, marking the first time since the days of the anti-Vietnam War movement that ideas from the left have helped set the national agenda. "It took three years from the start of the anti-Vietnam War movement to the point when the popularity of the war sank below 50 percent," Todd Gitlin, a professor at the Columbia University journalism school and a participant in and chronicler of the 1960s radical movement, told *New York* magazine in November. "Here, achieving the equivalent took three minutes."⁹

A closer precedent to Occupy arguably lies not in the 1960s but in the 1930s, when the left and unions made common cause — including in the organization of factory occupations. Nevertheless, notes historian Michael Kazin of Georgetown University, "The union movement had no problem with leaders."

The Occupy movement, inspired by anarchist principles, rejects hierarchy in favor of direction by consensus — in other words, "pure" democracy. (See sidebar, p. 36.) What's more, the movement lacks a clear-cut program and has little to point to in the way of measurable results. "The Occupy movement is rooted in the idea that the political system is broken to such a degree that we can no longer work through the Republican or Democratic parties," Tim Franzen, an Occupy Atlanta activist, told *The Associated Press*.¹⁰

To be sure, Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York in December suddenly reversed his avowed-

ly unbending opposition to a so-called "millionaires' tax" on the earnings of high-income New Yorkers. Occupy activists had dubbed Cuomo "Governor 1 Percent."¹¹

Survey data make clear that discontent over inequality isn't limited to New York. A substantial majority — 77 percent — of respondents to a November survey by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center agreed that corporations and a small number of rich people wield too much power. And — in a remarkable loss of faith in a bedrock tenet of the American Dream — 40 percent said hard work and determination don't guarantee success.¹²

However, agreeing with some of Occupy activists' points doesn't automatically mean supporting the movement. In December, Pew found that 49 percent of respondents disapproved of the way demonstrations were conducted — almost the exact share that registered agreement with the movement on issues. (See graphs, above.)

By then, coverage of the movement had included news accounts of November street clashes in Oakland, Calif. Some featured ultra-radical activists who saw breaking store windows as a form of political action. Others featured aggressive police who in one instance fired a tear gas canister that fractured the skull of an Iraq War veteran.¹³

“Americans usually like the idea of rebellion more than rebellion itself,” says Kazin, “not people fighting with cops, even if it’s not the fault of the demonstrators. They like protest as long as it’s orderly.”

Still, for Democrats, the Occupy movement has opened a window of political opportunity. In early December, Obama traveled to historic Osawatomie, Kan., to deliver a major speech on economic inequality. “The typical CEO who used to earn about 30 times more than his or her worker now earns 110 times more,” he said. “And yet, over the last decade the incomes of most Americans have actually fallen by about 6 percent. . . . Today, thanks to loopholes and shelters, a quarter of all millionaires now pay lower tax rates than millions of you, millions of middle-class families. Some billionaires have a tax rate as low as 1 percent.”¹⁴

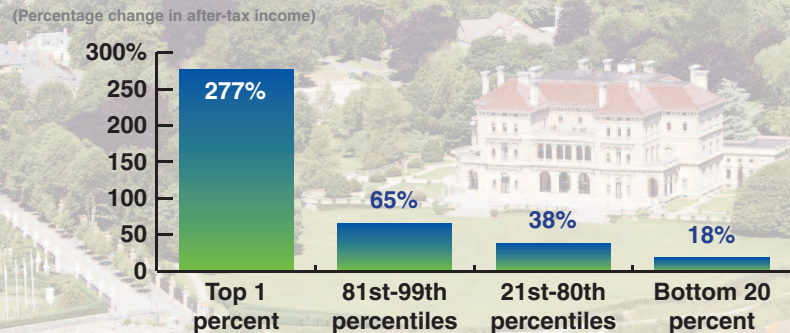
Osawatomie is a political landmark — the site of a 1910 speech by President Theodore Roosevelt urging that corporate power be reined in. “The great special business interests too often control and corrupt the men and methods of government for their own profit,” declared Roosevelt, who would soon run again for president as Progressive Party candidate.¹⁵ The White House republished Roosevelt’s address simultaneously with the text of Obama’s speech. As for the Occupy movement, the president mentioned it only once, and briefly.

Republican primary candidates’ responses to Occupy, meanwhile, have ranged from equivocal to hostile. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney,

Top 1 Percent Has Biggest Income Gain

The after-tax income of the top 1 percent of American households rose nearly 300 percent between 1979 and 2007, while that of other groups grew at much slower rates. The bottom 20 percent saw only an 18 percent rise over the period.

Income Gains, by Income Group, 1979 to 2007



Source: Chad Stone, et al., “A Guide to Statistics on Historical Trends in Income Inequality,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, November 2011, www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3629; Congressional Budget Office.

who became a multimillionaire in the corporate takeover business, defended Wall Street financiers in October against what he called attempts at “finding a scapegoat, finding someone to blame.”¹⁶ But a more recent campaign commercial used hand-written signs bearing gloomy economic statistics, seeming to mimic a well-known Occupy technique.¹⁷

Meanwhile, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., offered some mocking advice to demonstrators: “Go get a job, right after you take a bath,” he said in November. He went on to disparage them as non-taxpaying freeloaders.¹⁸

As the Republicans spoke out, the Tea Party faction of their party, which helped the GOP regain control of the House in 2011, was heading downward in public opinion. The trend held true both nationally and in congressional districts represented by lawmakers identified with the faction, the Pew Center reported in November. In those districts, 48 percent of respondents said

they viewed the Tea Party unfavorably, and 41 percent favorably — a sharp shift from last March, when the favorability rate was 55 percent.¹⁹

The Occupy movement could face its own decline — but not for some time, say many observers. “Just when you thought demonstrations and people putting bodies on the line was over,” says former Democratic Gov. Madeleine Kunin of Vermont, “it re-emerges.”

As debate continues over the impact and future of the Occupy movement, here are some questions being asked:

Can the Occupy movement reduce inequality?

After reading some of the hundreds of stark, personal accounts offered on “We Are the 99 Percent” — a website that offers stories behind the statistics, charts and slogans about economic inequality — Rich Lowry, a prominent Republican commentator and Occupy opponent, acknowledged that the protest movement had raised some legitimate questions.²⁰

'OCCUPY' MOVEMENT

"There are tales of men losing decent-paying jobs and finding nothing comparable," wrote Lowry, editor of *National Review* magazine, the flagship of Republican conservatism since 1955. "Such downward mobility is a dismaying constant. . . . The recession has added a layer of joblessness on top of punishingly dysfunctional and expensive health-care and higher-education systems."²¹

The accounts on the website are by low-paid workers, unemployed people with experience but no job prospects, students accumulating debt and sufferers of chronic illness with inadequate health insurance — or none at all.

Lowry's take on the issue animating the movement may be a minority view among conservatives. But his commentary — though critical of the Occupy movement's politics — illustrated a point made by reporter Dylan Byers of *Politico*, an influential Washington newspaper. He noted that the term "income inequality" had soared in frequency in news stories, from 91 appearances before the demonstrations began to 500 a week in early November.²²

Occupiers "already can take credit for starting a national conversation about the increasingly inequitable distribution of growth that stands as a profound economic problem in our country," wrote Jared Bernstein, a senior fellow at the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and former chief economist for Vice President Joseph Biden.²³

Generating attention and debate, though an important achievement, might

mark the limit of what the Occupy movement can do, some sympathizers acknowledge.

"We've had a wave of columns and news stories based on inequality," says Dean Baker, an economist and co-founder and co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. "But I don't think anyone is going to say that he changed his position based on the movement."

The very nature of the Occupy movement may limit its direct political effects, Baker says. "It's an amorphous group; it doesn't want to em-



Occupy Wall Street activists gather in New York City's Duarte Square on Nov. 15, 2011, after police removed them from Zuccotti Park. The police action, endorsed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, followed similar moves in Oakland, Calif., and Portland, Ore.

Getty Images/Mario Tama

brace politicians," he says. "One can argue about whether that is the most effective way to proceed."

However, activists can point to one example of a politician who appears to have responded to the Occupy message by reversing himself on an important piece of legislation with a direct effect on income inequality.

Cuomo, the New York governor, in early December suddenly embraced and pushed to legislative approval a so-called "millionaires' tax" on individuals who earn more than \$200,000 a year.

In the weeks leading up to his move, Cuomo had declared unbendable opposition to the tax. Said Tim Dubnau, an organizer for the Communication Workers of America (CWA) who has been working closely with Occupy Wall Street, "There is no doubt in anyone's mind that that is a result of the Occupy Wall Street movement educating people" about tax policy.

And Dubnau noted that the tax debate that Occupy amplified is being echoed in the nationwide focus on equality. "In every single paper in the country almost every single day for months there have been stories about how we have an unequal society," he says. "I can't see that as a bad thing."

Nevertheless, New York, where labor unions still carry political weight and leftwing activism is deeply embedded in the state's history and political culture, may not be a national indicator of Occupy influence. "A movement is likely to get concessions in a sympathetic environment," says McVeigh of Notre Dame.

From a national perspective, "The polls are showing a fair number of people are fairly sympathetic to what Occupy Wall Street is putting forward, but without an intense commitment," McVeigh says. "So it's risky for anybody in power to completely embrace the movement and call it his or her own."

Even so, says Cornell University's Margolies, congressional Republicans' internal disagreement over Obama's efforts to extend the payroll tax cut may reflect confusion over how to deal with the inequality issue that Occupy activists have emphasized. "The movement has certainly changed the debate," Margolies

says. “The Republicans realized they’re getting caught by their own rhetoric; they finally found a tax cut they don’t like.” (He spoke before House Republicans caved to pressure from the White House and their own Senate partners, backing a two-month extension of the tax cut.)

But Margolies qualifies his favorable reading of the movement’s effects. “A real test would be if it helps a union win a major strike or get a contract in a tough situation, or helps change labor law, or helps a group of workers organize.”

Is Occupy good for the Democratic Party?

In his Kansas speech in December, President Obama drew on themes sounded by Occupy members, connecting them to longstanding political traditions that energized the early 20th-century wave of political and financial regulation known as the Progressive Era.

Obama made much of the fact that the politician who laid the groundwork for those changes, President Theodore Roosevelt, had been a Republican.

But the president went on to underline the difference between Roosevelt and his party descendants of today. “Thanks to some of the same folks who are now running Congress, we had weak regulation, we had little oversight, and what did it get us?” he asked rhetorically.

Whether Obama can draw on the anger that has fed the Occupy movement remains unclear, however. A cautionary example comes from the recent experience of the Republican Party with its Tea Party faction. The Tea Party propelled a number of Republican congressional candidates to victory in 2010, giving the GOP the House majority. But in the GOP presidential primaries, many candidates arguably have tacked so far to the right to appeal to the Tea Party that they may have alienated mainstream Republican voters.

“Republicans now are growing very nervous” because Tea Party freshman in the House have been so adamant against compromise, Norman Ornstein, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative think tank, said in December. “By standing so firm against taxing the rich . . . they lost sight of where the zeitgeist was, and it hurt them.”²⁴

But Obama faces problems within his own party, most notably disillusion among many Democrats over what they see as a lack of progress on social and economic reforms. That disillusion has helped animate the Occupy movement. “People went through the experience of 2008 and had their hopes raised significantly by Obama in a way we haven’t seen in this generation,” says Amy Muldoon, a CWA union member participating in an Occupy Wall Street working group on organized labor. “And now the Occupy movement in part is people who went through that experience and said, ‘it didn’t deliver for me.’ ”

Muldoon, speaking for herself and not the union, says a significant number of the most engaged Occupy activists are “looking past elections as a way of changing society.” Democrats’ attempts to “utilize what Occupy has exposed — with rhetoric about a candidate for the 99 percent, meaning Obama — I don’t think will fly with the people who are most involved with Occupy.”

To voters at large, however, argues Georgetown’s Kazin, the Occupy movement has provided an appealing narrative “as long as people see the economy in serious trouble and are worried about their futures.”

Moreover, the electoral alienation of the most committed Occupy activists doesn’t pose an active threat to Democratic prospects, Kazin says. In the 1960s, “The antiwar movement saw Democrats and [President Lyndon B. Johnson, a

Democrat who escalated the Vietnam War] as prime villains,” he says. “I haven’t seen that same hostility and hatred for Obama. A lot of core activists clearly think there is no difference between Republicans and Democrats, but that’s not the same as saying that it’s the Democrats’ fault that we have economic inequality and a financial crisis.”

But Nick Schulz, a fellow at AEI and editor of its online magazine, argues that the nature of the Occupy movement itself poses a potential problem for Democrats in general and Obama in particular. “I come from the school that says that being positive in your politics is a winning formula,” he says. “That’s not what emerged from Occupy. I understand why people in Occupy are angry, but if the negative animating spirit of Occupy comes to dominate the Democratic Party, that’s a political loser.”

Obama owes much of his success to his ability to convey optimism, Schulz says. But in the coming election, he argues, if voters see the president’s message as intertwined with Occupy grievances, “The moderately conservative, college-educated cohort that went in large numbers for Obama because they liked his upbeat, aspirational message. If it becomes a negative — ‘we’re going after the rich and the top 1 percent’ — that will turn them off.”

Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research suggests that Occupy likely will benefit some Democrats and hurt others. “It’s bad news for the more business-oriented Democrats,” he argues, pointing to Robert Rubin — a Wall Street financier, former director of Citigroup and former Treasury secretary in the Clinton administration who still wields considerable influence on administration economic policy. “Their room to maneuver has been sharply reduced by the Occupy movement; they certainly don’t see it as good news.”²⁵

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On the other hand, Baker says, “The labor-progressive wing of the Democratic Party certainly does see it as good news.” Even so, adds Baker, repercussions from Occupy attacks on business-oriented Democrats could hurt the movement’s liberal allies. “The Rubin types provide money for campaigns,” Baker says. “Do you run the risk that you’re going to so antagonize the business wing of the party that you won’t be able to run effective campaigns?”

Is the Occupy movement over?

The onset of winter, and police evictions, have deprived the Occupy name of its emotional punch — the occupations themselves — lending new strength to questions about the movement’s goals. Those questions have been circulating virtually ever since it began: What exactly does the movement want to achieve? And does it have staying power?

Some observers see change within the political system as a waste of time.

Many call themselves disenchanted after investing their political energies. “Obama syndrome: lost hope,” says Sri Louise, who is active in Occupy Oakland. “I feel like I’ve been there and done that. I have no interest in the electoral process.”

Others argue that improving that process is the movement’s natural goal.

“If you want to get at the root of what’s wrong with this system, in my opinion the way we fund and run elections has become skewed in the direction of powerful money interests,”

says Kunin, the former Vermont governor, summarizing a column she wrote for *The Huffington Post* website.²⁶ “If we’re going to have the voice of the 99 percent back, we have to change that system and find a way to do public financing or limit contributions.”

The tension between reformers and revolutionaries — a natural condition in all social movements — remains unresolved. “At some point, movements must take on some form,

spiring,” says the CWA’s Dubnau. “There are some signs the movement is fizzling with the physical space of Zuccotti Park lost.”

Activists reoccupied the park in early January after city authorities removed barricades and checkpoints that had limited the number of people allowed in; but a ban on tents and sleeping bags remained in force.

But Dubnau, like many others, expects open-air demonstrations to revive with the coming of warm weather. The movement has struck a chord, he says. “Everyone is anxious about jobs in America; everyone knows what the occupiers are talking about.”

Nevertheless, Artur Davis, a former Democratic congressman from Alabama and now a Washington lawyer who writes political commentary for *Politico*, argues that maintaining a physical presence “is a low bar to meet.” The real test of lasting influence, he says, will be the Occupy movement’s ability to accomplish political goals.

One obstacle so far, Davis says, is that the “99 percent” versus “1 per-

cent” paradigm is too broad and vague. “It equates the interests of a hungry child in the Mississippi Delta with a stockbroker who makes six figures but whose mortgage is underwater,” he says. “It’s as if the civil rights movement had said in the 1960s, ‘We’re not going to make this about African-Americans, we’re going to make it about people who are struggling all over the country; we’re going to equate our interests with those of white suburbanites who are paying too much property tax.’ ”



Occupy activists demonstrate as Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich and his wife Callista, both at right, arrive at a town hall meeting in Littleton, N.H., on Jan. 5, 2012. In November, he told Occupy demonstrators: “Go get a job, right after you take a bath.” He went on to disparage them as non-taxpaying freeloaders.

Getty Images/Win McNamee

some identifiable agenda,” the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a veteran of the 1960s civil rights movement, told *New York* magazine. “At some point, water must become ice.”²⁷

Whether many people like camping in city parks when water turns to ice is another question. Nevertheless, some argue that the loss of New York’s Zuccotti Park did take a toll on Occupy Wall Street — the national movement’s starter motor. “The fact that people were willing to sleep out in the cold rain and snow was in-

From within the movement, though, some lifelong activists who've seen other political waves rise and fall argue that skeptics are thinking too small. Adam Hochschild, a journalist and author who co-founded the left-wing *Mother Jones* magazine in 1976 and who has written on the 18th- and 19th-century campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire, likened that effort to Occupy. "By 1792 at least 400,000 people in the British Isles were refusing to eat slave-grown sugar," Hochschild wrote in the "Occupied Wall Street Journal," published by New York activists.²⁸

"In combating entrenched power of a different sort — a system with obscene profits for the 1 percent and hardship and a downward slide for many of the rest — I think we're now at about 1792 in this process," Hochschild wrote.²⁹

Hochschild and others who see the movement reaching for changes in how wealth and power are distributed agree — in a sense — with some of their most fervent foes. "The philosophical political movement that these extreme leftists have decided to participate in will try to continue," says David Bossie, president and board chairman of Citizens United, a conservative advocacy group that specializes in producing politically charged documentary-style movies.*

The encampments reflected the movement's philosophical underpinnings, Bossie says. "It's the closest form of communal living," he says, tracing the tent cities to "socialism, communism — you name the institutions by which they believe. They believe in taking from everyone and giving it to them." ■

* Bossie's lawsuit challenging a Federal Election Commission decision to limit advertising for a Citizens United work, "Hillary: The Movie," led to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning restrictions on corporate political contributions.

BACKGROUND

Rising Militancy

Economic transformation capped by a major depression marked the late 19th century, prompting a wave of activism among farmers and factory workers. Wall Street financiers, industrialists and politicians who served business interests were their common targets.³⁰

In the 1880s, a wave of labor organizing spread across manufacturing, shipping and mining centers throughout the country. Twelve-hour work days, paltry pay, child labor, the right to collectively bargain and the often hazardous nature of the work spurred workers to demand change. Many went further, demanding that society be re-ordered so that the fruits of labor were distributed more equitably.

Workers had been forming and joining unions for decades, but they were made up of craftspeople whose skills gave them considerable power in dealing with employers. As industrialization advanced in the latter decades of the 1800s, a new kind of union arose.

The Knights of Labor, founded in secret in 1869, grew into an open organization for all skilled and unskilled members of the "producing classes." (Members included African-Americans and, eventually, women — revolutionary policies at the time.) "We declare an inevitable and irresistible conflict between the wage system of labor and republican system of government," the Knights said, vowing to fight big-business domination of government.³¹

In 1885, the Knights led a successful strike against one of the country's leading corporations, the Southwestern Railroad, whose majority owner was fabled Wall Street financier Jay Gould. By 1886, as many as 1 million mem-

bers, about 10 percent of the country's nonagricultural workforce, had joined the union.

A five-year depression that began in 1893 saw labor-business conflicts escalate into armed confrontations between workers and police and military forces deployed against them. President Grover Cleveland sent 10,000 Army troops to Chicago to quell a nationwide strike against the Pullman Palace Car Co., which manufactured sleeping cars for railroads. Thirteen strike supporters were killed in clashes with anti-union forces.³²

Newly unemployed workers mounted campaigns of their own. The most well-known centered on a march from Ohio to Washington led by evangelical businessman Jacob S. Coxey, who advocated a major road-building program to put jobless men to work. "Coxey's Army" was met in Washington by U.S. marshals, who arrested Coxey and other leaders, snuffing out the effort.³³

Shortly before the 1893 depression struck, a mass movement arose featuring rural Americans demanding better prices from companies that bought their crops, as well as a host of other improvements in conditions in the countryside. The movement evolved quickly into a political organization — from the Farmers' Alliance to the People's Party, founded in 1892, and soon dubbed "Populists."

In 1892, populist candidates around the country earned more than 1 million votes. Colorado and Kansas elected Populist governors, and Populist presidential candidate James Weaver captured three states, thus winning electoral votes. But ultimately, the third-party effort benefited the Republicans. In the 1896 presidential election, Republican William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan, who ran as both Democrat and Populist. And in 1912, Woodrow Wilson beat William Howard Taft, thanks partly to Theodore

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Chronology

1880s-1920s

Organizing drives and strikes by industrial workers provoke repression.

1885

Knights of Labor leads successful strike against Southwestern Railroad.

1894

Workers strike at Pullman Palace Car Co. in Chicago; President Grover Cleveland sends troops to break the labor action. . . . Men demanding jobs march on Washington.

1905

Left-wing unionists found anti-capitalism Industrial Workers of the World.

1910

President Theodore Roosevelt denounces corporate power in speech in Osawatimie, Kan.

1929

Wall Street crash marks beginning of Great Depression.

1930s *Nation's worst depression sparks massive discontent, rise of new unions.*

1932

"Bonus Army" of 20,000 jobless World War I veterans sets up camp in Washington but is eventually routed by Army troops and police.

1934

Wagner Act restricts employer interference in union activities.

1936

"Sitdown" tactic spreads to General Motors factories; company recognizes the United Automobile Workers union.

1950s-1960s

Civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements make mass protest a major political force.

1955

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. leads bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala.

1956

Montgomery desegregates buses.

1957

President Dwight D. Eisenhower orders Army troops to enforce desegregation in Little Rock, Ark.

1960

Black students sit in at Greensboro, N.C., lunch counter to challenge segregated seating; tactic spreads.

1961

"Freedom Riders" defy segregation in interstate buses and terminals.

1964

Civil Rights Act prohibits racial discrimination in public accommodations, public education and most employment.

1965

Voting Rights Act outlaws racial discrimination in election process.

1967

Tens of thousands march in Washington to protest Vietnam War.

1968

The Rev. King is assassinated in Memphis.

1970

As demonstrations against U.S. invasion of Cambodia sweep campuses and cities, National Guard troops kill four students at Ohio's Kent State University, and police kill two students at Jackson State College in Mississippi.

1990s-Present

Left-wing activism targets liberalized trade rules, job outsourcing and Iraq War.

1993

Over strong opposition from unions and the left, President Bill Clinton pushes North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) through Congress.

1997

College students organize boycott to protest athletic-wear companies using sweatshops.

1999

Anti-globalization protesters in Seattle battle with police at World Trade Organization meeting.

2003

Iraq War sparks a new anti-war movement.

2007

Richest 1 percent of population sees after-tax income grow by about 275 percent since 1979 while middle-income sector sees modest growth. . . . Recession begins.

2008

Obama presidential campaign awakens hope for rebirth of left-Democratic Party alliance that collapsed during Vietnam War.

2010

Energized by Tea Party faction, Republican candidates sweep House elections, gaining majority. . . . Left-wing Obama supporters grow disillusioned with economic policies seen as too timid.

2011

"Arab spring" in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, and protests against austerity programs and inequality in Spain and Israel prompt U.S. activists to consider similar efforts.

Tracking Occupy's Evolution

The "Occupy" movement began in September in New York City to protest economic inequality and corporate greed. Since then the movement has spread across the U.S. Here is a timeline of its evolution:

2011

July 13 — Canadian anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* calls for a Sept. 17 protest on Wall Street demanding "democracy not corporatocracy."



Zuccotti Park

Sept. 17 — Protests begin as about 1,000 participants walk up and down Wall Street. Protesters settle into Zuccotti Park.

Sept. 20 — Police arrest mask-wearing protesters under state law banning non-entertainment masked gatherings.

Sept. 24 — About 80 arrested in Manhattan after marching without permit. The use of pepper spray against women earns Occupy movement its first major media coverage. Occupy protests begin in Chicago.



Moore

Sept. 26 — Filmmaker and activist Michael Moore addresses crowd at Zuccotti Park.

Sept. 28 — Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York City becomes first large union to support Occupy protest.

Oct. 1 — Nearly 700 protesters arrested in march across Brooklyn Bridge. Protests begin in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C.

Oct. 3 — Protests begin in Boston, Memphis, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Hawaii and Maine.

Oct. 5 — New York labor unions join march through N.Y. Financial District.



Obama

Oct. 6 — Protests begin in Austin, Houston, San Francisco and Tampa. President Obama says the movement "expresses the frustrations the American people feel."

Oct. 7 — New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg says protesters are taking jobs from people and discouraging tourism.

Oct. 10 — Bloomberg softens criticism, saying protesters can stay if they obey the law.

Oct. 25 — Oakland police clear about 170 protesters from a City Hall encampment, use tear gas when protesters return.

Nov. 5 — "Bank Transfer Day" protesters encourage Americans to move their money out of big banks.

Nov. 15 — Police evict protesters from Zuccotti Park under orders from Bloomberg. A judge rules protesters do not have a First Amendment right to camp in the park, but can return without tents.



Cuomo

Nov. 17 — Protesters march in front of the New York Stock Exchange to mark movement's two-month anniversary.

Dec. 17 — Protesters mark three-month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street by marching across the city.

Dec. 20 — Hacker group Anonymous exposes personal information of police officers who have arrested protesters.

2012

Jan. 1 — Nearly 70 protesters arrested after attempt to resettle into Zuccotti Park. Protesters march at the end of Rose Bowl parade in Pasadena, Calif., on float made of plastic bags.



Romney

Jan. 2 — Protesters interrupt speech by Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in Des Moines, Iowa.

Jan. 4 — Protesters attend New Hampshire town hall meeting with Romney prior to state's primary Jan. 10. Organizers say they plan protests at future primaries, caucuses.

Jan. 10 — Protesters are permitted back into Zuccotti Park.

All photos/Getty Images

Surprising Alliance: Activists and Union Members

"We are united in the belief that our country needs a change."

As he marched through Lower Manhattan last October leading telephone workers side by side with Occupy Wall Street activists, Tim Dubnau, a union organizer for the Communications Workers of America (CWA), could tell that the OWS movement's message was reaching beyond its natural left-wing constituency.

"When we passed the World Trade Center, 'I chanted, 'Every job a union job,' and the hard-hat people [working on the site] were giving us the thumbs up," says Dubnau, one of a number of unionists across the country building ties with the movement.

A salute from New York City "hard-hats" carries special significance for left-wing activists. Ever since a contingent of construction workers beat up anti-Vietnam War protesters (only blocks from the eventual World Trade Center site) in 1970, the building trades have been considered a bastion of working-class patriotism and contempt for the left and the counterculture.¹

But the hardhat reception witnessed by Dubnau during the march to the headquarters of communications giant Verizon — which is locked in a contract fight with the CWA — was only one sign of a budding Occupy-union alliance.

CWA donated thousands of dollars' worth of walkie-talkies and air mattresses to occupiers and also provided meeting rooms. Other unions have supplied ponchos and storage space. Unions elsewhere have been generous as well.²

Top union leaders have been showering the movement with praise since shortly after the first OWS encampment, at Manhattan's Zuccotti Park, went up. "Across America, working people are turning out with their friends and neighbors in parks, congregations and union halls to express their frustration — and anger — about our country's staggering wealth gap," Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, declared in October, vowing continued union support for the Occupy movement.³

Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees Inter-

national Union (SEIU) declared her solidarity in *The Wall Street Journal*. "While unions cannot claim credit for Occupy Wall Street," she wrote, "SEIU members are joining the protesters in the streets because we are united in the belief that our country needs a change."⁴

Amy Muldoon, a phone worker who also works part time with the Occupy movement for the CWA, says activism focused on social and economic inequality creates a political climate favorable to organized labor.

"The unions recognize," she says, "that it's beneficial to negotiate contracts at a time when people are saying the rich and banks and corporations get away with whatever they want, and politicians are bought and sold by them."

Nevertheless, union-Occupy ties could fray when the presidential race intensifies. Already, some Occupy activists have made plain their distance from unions' long and close ties to the Democratic Party.

"There will be debates in the movement about whether people should put their energy into supporting Democrats," says Jackie Smith, a University of Pittsburgh sociology professor and Occupy activist. In that atmosphere, she says, "It will be difficult to maintain coalitions with labor."

Relations were tested on the West Coast by Occupy-initiated attempts to shut down two ports on Dec. 12. "U.S. ports have become economic engines for the elite; the 1 percent these trade hubs serve are free to rip the shirts off the backs of the 99 percent who turn their profits," the organizers of the West Coast Port Blockade announced online.⁵

In addition to the port of Oakland, Calif., the shutdowns targeted SSA Marine, a West Coast port operator, and EGT, which runs a grain shipping terminal in Longview, Wash., that is in a contract dispute with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). SSA is also partly owned by Goldman Sachs, a major Wall Street firm, making it an even more tempting target for Occupy activists.⁶

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Roosevelt's third-party candidacy.

The labor movement divided as well, with more radical unionists (including anarchists) forming the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in 1905, to fight for the overthrow of capitalism.

The years of union and populist activism, as well as the depression of 1893, presaged the early-20th-century "progressive" era, embodied by Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson.

The period was marked by federal and state moves to improve working conditions. By 1912, 38 states prohibited or limited child labor, and the federal government had imposed regulations on the banking industry.

Often forgotten today is the extent of death and destruction — some of from the radical side — that accompanied the rise of the labor movement and the enactment of laws that granted legal protection to unions. "For more

than half a century, between the 1870s and the 1930s," writes historian Beverly Gage of Yale University, "labor organizers and strikers regularly faced levels of violence all but unimaginable to modern-day activists."³⁴

Marching and Occupying

The Great Depression that began in 1929 brought massive unem-

But union leadership opposed the Longview shutdown. “Support is one thing, organization from outside groups attempting to co-opt our struggle in order to advance a broader agenda is quite another,” ILWU President Robert McEllrath said in a letter to local unions a week before the shutdown attempts, “and one that is destructive to our democratic process and jeopardizes our over-two-year struggle.”⁷

In the end, port shutdowns in Longview, Oakland and Portland, Ore., cost union longshoremen all or most of their day’s pay. Non-unionized truck drivers weren’t paid at all. “This is a joke,” driver Christian Vega told The Associated Press. “What are they protesting? It only hurts me and the other drivers.”⁸

Some union longshoremen were happy with the protests. The website of the Southern California ILWU local carried a video in which Anthony, a shutdown-supporting longshoreman in Oakland, says that members were split 50-50 on the matter. “Some are upset because they lost a day’s pay,” he said.⁹

Anthony supported the shutdown as a “warning that the working class is serious.” But, he added, the Occupy movement “probably has to get away from that 99 percent slogan, because then a lot of people say, ‘You’re hurt by the 99 percent not letting you go to work.’”¹⁰

Even some leftwing union activists found the shutdown troubling in ways that suggest that maintaining union-Occupy relations may take some work. “The ILWU is not a corrupt, stodgy union,” says Dubnau of CWA. “If they’re saying this is



Long Beach police arrest an Occupy protester on Dec. 12, 2011, for blocking the road leading to SSA Marine, a shipping company partially owned by investment bank Goldman Sachs.

Getty Images/Kevork Djiansejian

not a good tactic, you don’t from the outside say this is a good tactic; you can’t disrespect them,” he says. “Yeah, it feels good to shut down ports; it’s relatively easy to do — that doesn’t mean it’s a good strategy. You can’t do it just because it’s militant.”

— Peter Katel

¹ For newspaper articles and other documentary material on the event, see “The HardHat Riots, an Online History Project,” George Mason University, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/hardhats/homepage.html>.

² Quoted in David B. Caruso, “Occupy movement accepts modest help from the left,” The Associated Press, Nov. 1, 2011.

³ “Statement by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka on Occupy Wall Street,” AFL-CIO, press release, Oct. 5, 2011, www.aflcio.org/mediacenter/prspmt/pr10052011.cfm.

⁴ Mary Kay Henry, “Why Labor Backs ‘Occupy Wall Street,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 8, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203476804576615200938120050.html>.

⁵ “Wall Street On the Waterfront?” West Coast Port Blockade, undated, <http://westcoastportshutdown.org/content/wall-street-waterfront>.

⁶ “Occupy protesters seek to shut West Coast ports,” The Associated Press, Dec. 12, 2011; Terry Collins, “Protesters halt operations at some western ports,” The Associated Press, Dec. 13, 2011.

⁷ “Message from Pres. McEllrath: We share Occupy’s concerns about America, but EGG battle is complicated,” ILWU Local 13, Dec. 6, 2011, www.ilwu13.com/message-from-pres.-mcellrath-we-share-occupy-s-concerns-about-america-but-egt-battle-is-complicated-4580.html.

⁸ Quoted in Collins, *op. cit.*

⁹ “Anthony from ILWU on OccupyOakland.TV,” OccupyOaklandTV, Dec. 12, 2011, www.ilwu13.com/dec.-12th---anthony-from-ilwu-on-occupyoakland.tv-4800.html.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

ployment and widespread misery. In 1932, as the administration of Republican President Herbert Hoover drew to a close, following years in which he minimized the Depression’s effects and refused to mount a major government response, thousands of jobless World War I veterans demanded assistance. Specifically, they wanted the government to immediately pay a cash bonus they had been promised. When no help was offered, a group

of vets began marching on Washington from Portland, Ore. As the idea caught on, “bonus marchers” from across the country headed for the capital. Their encampments eventually housed about 20,000 people, including some vets’ families.

After Congress — with Hoover’s support — defeated resolutions to make early payments of the bonus, Washington police and then the U.S. Army heavy-handedly destroyed the bonus

marchers’ camps. Most notoriously, Army Chief of Staff Douglas A. MacArthur ignored orders to the contrary and sent troops across the Anacostia River to break up the vets’ biggest tent city.³⁵

Occupation tactics proved far more successful in the workplace. Following a wave of strikes in 1934 that descended into armed conflict in several cities, Congress passed the landmark Wagner Act, endorsed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The law autho-

rized unions to organize and to strike. With factory production resuming as the economy slowly revived, workers at the Firestone tire factory in Akron, Ohio, hit on a new tactic in response to the company's suspension of a union activist.³⁶

Instead of leaving the factory and mounting a picket line, the workers stopped working but stayed in place. The union won: The suspended worker was reinstated, and the occupiers were paid (though at a lower rate) for the time they'd spent on strike.

The occupation — or "sitdown" — tactic spread rapidly through the entire automobile industry (and even to department stores and smaller shops in Detroit and Chicago). It generally was designed to pressure companies into recognizing and negotiating with unions. Factory takeovers were marked by workers' discipline in preventing damage to machinery.

Factory takeovers reached their peak in 1936. The standout was the occupation of General Motors factories in Flint, Mich., where GM employed about 80 percent of the workforce. The company fought back, on at least one occasion sending police to try to retake a Chevrolet plant. That move failed. And after sitdown strikes spread to GM factories elsewhere, the company gave in, formally recognizing the United Automobile Workers (UAW) as bargaining agent for workers in the occupied factories.

By late 1937, the union's victory against the world's major carmaker

brought an influx of members that swelled UAW rolls to nearly 400,000, from 30,000 the previous year. And the union's example encouraged workers in other industries: 4.7 million took part in strikes in 1937, including 400,000 who joined sitdowns. That same year, total union strength reached 7 million.

Businesspeople and politicians who saw the hand of the Communist

into an irrepressible force in the 1950s as it adopted the tactic of mass defiance of segregation.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed school segregation. The following year, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led a boycott of city buses in Montgomery, Ala., in response to the arrest of NAACP activist Rosa Parks for defying the back-of-the-bus law and occupying a "white" seat.

The boycotters won their demand to abolish segregated seating on the buses.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent Army troops to enforce the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. — a move that a mob of white residents resisted, unsuccessfully. Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus charged that after the troop deployment, all of Little Rock was "an occupied territory."³⁸

These dramatic events set the stage for the politically and socially tumultuous 1960s.

The decade was only a month old when 20 black students from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro challenged segregation in public places with a new tactic aimed at lunch counters.

After lunch counter sit-ins spread throughout the South — soon forcing stores to desegregate — activists refusing to obey state "Jim Crow" laws in buses and bus stations in the South began mounting "freedom rides" in 1961. By year's end, after the Freedom Riders had braved mob violence, the federal Interstate Commerce Commission issued a categorical ban on racial segregation in interstate trains, buses and terminals.³⁹



Time Life Pictures/Getty Images/Francis Miller

Arkansas National Guard troops block Minnijean Brown, center, and other black students from entering Central High School in Little Rock on Sept. 4, 1957. After President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent U.S. Army troops to enforce desegregation at the school, a white mob resisted, unsuccessfully. Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus charged the troop deployment had turned Little Rock into "an occupied territory."

Party in the labor upsurge weren't entirely wrong, although major sectors of the movement were led by strongly anti-communist socialists. Communist Party members occupied important positions in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the labor federation to which the new breed of more militant unions belonged, as well as in steel, automobile, maritime and electrical unions.³⁷

Civil Rights and Vietnam

The movement for black equality, which had been building steadily throughout the 20th century, grew

The next major civil rights campaign — challenging exclusion of black people from voting in southern states — followed demonstrations throughout the South that sparked police violence and killings and bombings by hardcore segregationists. The campaign resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations, public education and most jobs, as well as voting procedures.⁴⁰

King and some other civil rights leaders followed those victories by shifting their focus to poverty, including in northern cities. King was assassinated in Memphis in 1968 as he lent support to sanitation workers, all of them black, striking over discriminatory pay and working conditions. A more radical wing of the civil rights movement embraced a black nationalist doctrine in which economic goals were subordinated to political objectives, especially a rejection of racial integration.⁴¹

As debate raged over the civil rights movement's future, opposition to the Vietnam War was expanding, especially on college campuses. Tens of thousands of male students were becoming eligible for the draft upon graduation (or dropping out), ensuring that the escalating war commanded their attention.

By the late 1960s, the anti-war movement became polarized between ultra-leftist radicals and traditionally minded leftist activists who wanted to focus on electoral politics.

On the radical left, the only anti-war mass organization — Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) — imploded in 1969 after a bitter conflict between the “Weatherman” faction,*

* The name came from a line in a Bob Dylan song, “Subterranean Homesick Blues:” “You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.”

which preached immediate armed struggle, and a Maoist group, the Progressive Labor Party, which advocated organizing workers. Less fanatical activists fell away and SDS vanished.

At the peak of anti-war activism, news in May 1970 of a U.S. military invasion into Cambodia brought millions of war opponents into the streets throughout the country. Student demonstrations at some 1,350 colleges and universities involved an estimated 4.3 million people — 60 percent of the country's total student population. Four students at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, were shot and killed by National Guard troops during a demonstration; and two students at predominantly African-American Jackson State College in Mississippi were shot to death by police.⁴²

The anti-war movement faded away with the U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973. Many members whose goals transcended an end to the war — that is, they sought a more equitable society — continued their activism. (An SDS founder, Tom Hayden, was a California legislator from 1982-2000.) But since the draft ended in 1973, America's military campaigns haven't mobilized an opposition even close to the size and intensity of the anti-Vietnam War movement.⁴³

Globalization

Issues that aroused the left in the post-Vietnam years included nuclear power (opposed), U.S. policy in Central America (opposed) and environmental protection (supported). In the 1990s, these concerns largely gave way to opposition to the package of liberalized foreign trade rules and job outsourcing known as “globalization.”

Opposition had been building for years among unions and residents of industrial areas in the Northeast and Midwest, which were losing jobs to foreign factories. When the North Amer-

ican Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came before Congress for approval in the early 1990s, the globalization question went national.⁴⁴

At first, the NAFTA debate took place almost entirely in the political arena, not the streets. Both the Democratic and Republican parties backed NAFTA; Democratic President Bill Clinton pushed it through Congress in 1993 after his Republican predecessor, George H. W. Bush, tried but failed to do so.⁴⁵

Opposition to globalization simmered through the 1990s, drawing much of its inspiration from movements in more politicized societies in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In the United States, one major form of activism, starting on campuses in 1997, centered on boycotts of firms whose running shoes, sweatshirts and other apparel were made in foreign and domestic sweatshops. Garment-workers unions played a major role as well, an early sign that unions and the left were rebuilding their historic alliance.⁴⁶

A more significant sign of that convergence came in 1999 during street demonstrations in Seattle that disrupted a meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) convened to negotiate international commerce rules. The demonstrations, which attracted as many 50,000 globalization opponents, included a small contingent of self-styled anarchists who smashed windows in chain stores and committed other acts of vandalism.

Seattle police were by their own accounts unprepared and overwhelmed. They responded by declaring a 50-block area of the city a “no-protest” zone, at one point declaring an all-night curfew in the area and deploying massive amounts of tear gas. Police Chief Norm Stamper, who resigned following the event, said recently that he unwittingly escalated conflict by using tear gas. Police who have recently used pepper spray against Occupy demonstrators are repeating his error,

Movement Mixes Anarchy and 'Pure' Democracy

Everybody gets to talk . . . and talk . . . and talk.

What's the difference between pure democracy and anarchy? The Occupy movement's decision-making process offers some answers. But one thing is certain: The process isn't neat and tidy. And sometimes it can be pretty raw.

At each occupation site, a General Assembly (G.A.) of all the activists present makes decisions through a process of "direct" democracy: Everyone votes on everything, everyone gets to speak. And speak. And speak. . . .

Some of them shout as well. At a December meeting of Occupy Oakland, one G.A. attendee periodically yelled four-letter obscenities during the assembly.

But occasional shouts are a price that the anarchist-inspired activists behind Occupy have been willing to pay. They launched Occupy Wall Street as a deliberately anti-hierarchical movement, providing a model for the entire nationwide movement and its sometimes chaotic decision-making process.

During preparations for a G.A. meeting in Manhattan in late October, a man approach the Facilitation Working Group, which would run the meeting, and proposed that the G.A. demand jobs for everyone. "The G.A. already said this is a movement without demands," another man said. "So how can there be a working group on demands?"¹

In reality, the entire Occupy movement embodies a demand for change in an economic and political system that activists view as deeply unequal. "We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice and oppression over equality run our governments," says the "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City," adopted by the Occupy Wall Street G.A. last Sept. 29.²

How to change the system? The declaration isn't specific: "Create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone."³

That hard-to-disagree-with goal reflects organizers' initial vision of a movement that welcomed all comers and gave them all equal voice. But anarchists, while opposed to hierarchy and political domination, don't necessarily oppose leadership and structure.

"The G.A. is beautiful, but it's not an effective decision-making body," an Occupy Wall Street organizer, filmmaker Marisa

Holmes, told *The New Yorker*.⁴ She developed a proposal for a "Spokes Council" that would run the encampment's day-to-day affairs. In late October, the G.A. approved the plan. (Though the 24-hour Wall Street camp no longer exists, the G.A. and the Spokes Council are still meeting.)⁵

Anarchism is popularly linked with wild-eyed bomb-throwers, who were indeed a presence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But anarchism as a political philosophy that traced social ills to hierarchical control had a deep influence on the early labor and radical movements, including the militant Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Its accomplishments included a landmark victory in a textile workers' strike in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, led in part by anarchists.⁶

Later, the antifascist side in the Spanish Civil War — which inspired generations of U.S. leftwingers — had a major anarchist presence. Though anarchism in theory rejects state power, four Spanish anarchist leaders became ministers in the Republican government that was under attack by right-wing military forces.⁷

Many European anarchists had become convinced years before, says Stephen Schwartz, a historian of the Spanish conflict, that their movement needed strong leaderships because "the anarchist workers could not attain on their own the necessary quality of leadership they needed to prevail in a major political conflict."⁸

Among U.S. radicals, anarchist influence has more recent roots as well. "There were strong anarchist streaks in the New Left of the 1960s," wrote Todd Gitlin, a professor at the Columbia University School of Journalism who was president of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1963-64.⁹

An SDS slogan, "Let the people decide," Gitlin added, "meant in practice, 'Let's have long meetings where everyone gets to talk.'" The eventual effect, he adds, was that "tiny hierarchies" of highly ideological Marxist-Leninists were able to take over the organization, which eventually splintered and fell apart.¹⁰

But that outcome only encouraged even deeper suspicion of hierarchies in later radical movements. And when the collapse

he told the BBC. "Today it is being used indiscriminately," he said, "and that is really appalling."⁴⁷

The Seattle demonstrations were a forerunner of the Occupy movement in other respects as well. Activists used email, Web chat rooms and cell phones — all in their infancy at the time — to mobilize and strategize. And they

welcomed the participation of labor unions, which saw globalization as a job-killer. "We told people, if you pick up a CD or a paper cup or a stereo, under this [WTO] system, this product has more protections than the workers producing it," Ron Judd, executive secretary of the King County Labor Council in Washington state, told the

Los Angeles Times, describing outreach to union members.⁴⁸

In 2001, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks transformed the political landscape. Left-liberal activists — those not transformed into hawks by the attacks — threw themselves into anti-Iraq War organizing, as well as civil liberties work and opposition to the George W.

of the Soviet Union seemed to spell the end of Marxism-Leninism as a viable model, and Western European socialist governments failed as well, Gitlin wrote, "Anarchism's major competitors for a theory of organization imploded."¹¹

But none of that makes running a non-hierarchical organization any easier. One question already prompting debate is whether Occupy activists will work in the 2012 presidential campaign — conducted within a hierarchical, centralized, corporate-influenced political system. Many, anarchists or not, are disinclined. "A lot of activists, myself included, we vote, but we don't necessarily put much energy into the electoral process," says Jackie Smith, a University of Pittsburgh sociology professor who is working with the Occupy movement in her city.

Some activists, members of small groups formed under the Occupy umbrella, are more interested in what anarchist theoreticians call "direct action" — the other side of the sometimes cumbersome G.A. process.

In Oakland, one young group of activists who constituted Occupy Oakland's Tactical Action Committee took over a foreclosed house in a tough section of West Oakland, intending to use it as a base to organize resistance to foreclosures (as Occupy activists have done in Brooklyn, Chicago and Atlanta).¹²

Occupying homes to prevent foreclosure reflects a classically anarchist approach — the opposite of, say, asking a bank not to foreclose, or a sheriff not to evict occupants.

"The reason anarchists like direct action is because it means refusing to recognize the legitimacy of structures of power," David Graeber, an American professor of anthro-



OFF/AFP/Getty Images

Vladimir Lenin, main founder of the Soviet state, clashed with anarchists. In the 1960s, young American radicals inspired by Lenin clashed with anarchist-inspired counterparts, hastening the eventual collapse of Students for a Democratic Society.

pology at the University of London and a Wall Street occupation planner, said before the movement began. "Nothing annoys forces of authority more than trying to bow out of the disciplinary game entirely and saying that we could just do things on our own. Direct action is a matter of acting as if you were already free."¹³

— Peter Katel, with reporting in Oakland by Daniel McGlynn

¹ Quoted in Mattathias Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied," *The New Yorker*, Nov. 28, 2011, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/11/28/111128fa_fact_schwartz.

² "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City," New York City General Assembly, www.nycga.net/resources/declaration.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Schwartz, *op. cit.*

⁵ New York City General Assembly, [/www.nycga.net/events/event/general-assembly-2012-01-05/](http://www.nycga.net/events/event/general-assembly-2012-01-05/).

⁶ Dorothy Gallagher, *All the Right Enemies: The Life and Murder of Carlo Tresca* (1988), pp. 35-40; Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed America* (2011), pp. 127-129.

⁷ Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (1961), pp. 44, 318.

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Bush administration.

Many commentators saw the 2008 Obama presidential campaign and the early phase of his administration as the rebirth of a liberal movement in sync with the Democratic Party — an alliance not seen since before the Vietnam War. "President Obama has a historic opportunity to restore an

alliance that was crucial to the success of twentieth-century liberalism," Julian Zelizer, a Princeton historian, wrote in the liberal *Dissent* magazine in 2010. "The 2008 election depended on a broad Democratic coalition that bridged left and center."⁴⁹

But the consensus is that the coalition is, at best, badly frayed. "For two

years," wrote Columbia University's Gitlin after Occupy Wall Street began, "Barack Obama got the benefit of the doubt from fervent supporters — I'd bet that many of those in Lower Manhattan during these weeks went door-to-door for him in 2008 — and that support explains why no one occupied Wall Street in 2009."⁵⁰ ■

CURRENT SITUATION

'Occupy' Caucuses

As the 2012 presidential race moves into full swing, Occupy demonstrators are trying to turn the primary-election process for evaluating presidential candidates into the latest theater of action.

The Iowa caucuses, held Jan. 3 and narrowly won by Romney by just eight votes over former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, provided a preview of the Occupy efforts. Activists who organized "Occupy Iowa Caucuses" vowed to confront both Republican contenders and supporters of President Obama. "President Obama and the other bought-and-paid-for candidates who give us the brush-off when we try to ask real questions will be forced to hear us as we converge upon their campaign headquarters," organizers said on a website set up for the occasion. "We will chase the candidates and their Wall Street cronies around the state of Iowa. . . . We are taking American democracy back!"⁵¹

When the Republican primary road show moved to New Hampshire in early January, Occupy activists followed. Their numbers were not large, though Occupy New Hampshire members did manage to draw attention by attending GOP candidates' campaign events, sometimes chanting slogans. One of their targets, Romney, won the primary with 39.3 percent of the vote. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Tex., came in second, with 22.9 percent, followed by former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, 16.9 percent; Gingrich, 9.4 percent; and former Sen. Rick Santorum, 2.2 percent. All vowed to pursue their candidacies in the South Carolina Republican primary.⁵²

In Iowa, activists' main targets were Republican candidates for the presidential nomination. For them, the Iowa caucuses — that state's more complicated version of a primary election — were a critical step in the process by which the list of contenders gets narrowed down.

On the last day of 2011, 18 Occupy protesters were arrested in separate episodes outside the Iowa headquarters of Republican candidates Michele Bachmann, a Minnesota representative who subsequently dropped out of the presidential race after finishing sixth in the state's caucuses; and former House speaker Gingrich, who finished fourth, and Santorum.⁵³

Most of those arrested — members of a contingent small enough to fit in three rented buses — were arduous veterans of previous Occupy demonstrations. One of them, 16-year-old Heaven Chamberlain, had been arrested at an Occupy demonstration at the Iowa state capitol in October. She professed pride in her record. "It shows that I'm active with the community," she told *The New York Times*, "and that I care about people's opinions."⁵⁴

Her mother and fellow Occupy activist shares that view of the teenager's rap sheet. "For her record I don't worry, because she's standing up for what's right," Heather Ryan told *The Times*.⁵⁵

Iowa is not the only place in which the movement has been trying to demonstrate a 2012 presence. "Whose year? Our year!" chanted several hundred people gathered in New York's Zuccotti Park on New Year's Eve.⁵⁶ Their attempt to reclaim the park ended as did several of the Occupy events of 2011 in New York — with arrests, including at least one police use of pepper spray.⁵⁷

Activists reoccupied the park in early January after city authorities removed barricades and checkpoints that had limited the number of people allowed in; but a ban on tents and sleeping bags remained in force.

But while the New York events resembled past confrontations between Occupy and the New York Police Department, the attempt to bring the movement to the caucuses apparently represented the first collision between Occupy and the electoral process.

Occupy activists aren't neglecting events that may enjoy higher visibility than primary elections. On New Year's Day, several thousand Occupy marchers followed the Rose Bowl parade in Pasadena, Calif., with a parade of their own. Their props included a 250-foot banner that said "We the People," and a 70-foot plastic octopus intended to represent the tentacles of corporate greed.⁵⁸

'Occupy' Elections

One political campaign stands out as the best test case so far of the Occupy movement's effect on voters and candidates.

Elizabeth Warren, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination for the 2012 Senate election in Massachusetts, is the closest thing to an Occupy candidate within the two-party system.

A Harvard Law School professor of commercial law who gained national attention as a fierce critic of the financial industry, Warren launched her candidacy after President Obama backed off nominating her to head the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He bowed to massive opposition from Republicans, echoing the position of industries the bureau is charged with overseeing. Warren, a specialist in consumer debt, largely wrote the legislation that created the bureau.⁵⁹

The Oklahoma-born Warren's advocacy on behalf of ordinary consumers who sign up for credit cards and take out mortgages has done wonders for the campaign treasury of her possible general-election oppo-

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At Issue:

Will the Occupy movement continue to affect American politics?



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the Super Committee, the big topic of conversation in Washington in early October, was the longstanding dream of many D.C. deficit hawks. It had the power to produce a deficit-reduction plan that would be fast-tracked through Congress.

But as it turned out, the Super Committee produced no plan to send to Congress for a vote. Its deadline passed, and the committee became just another deficit-reduction plan to be tossed into history's dustbin.

Part of the committee's story was undoubtedly the intransigence of Republican members who refused to go along with anything that could raise taxes. However, part of the story was the constraints perceived by Democrats who were openly willing to include cuts to Social Security and Medicare as part of a deal.

As the Occupy Wall Street movement spread across the country, the obsession with deficit reduction dwindled. Almost every major news outlet ran one or more major stories on the rise in income inequality over the past three decades. The distinction between the "1 percent" who were the big gainers in the economy over the last three decades and the "99 percent" who had almost nothing to show became a standard feature of political debate.

In this context, it became almost inconceivable for the Democrats on the Super Committee to "reward" the 99 percent with big cuts in Social Security and Medicare. The party that has pretenses of protecting working people and the poor could not be seen slashing these two essential programs at a time when the country is still suffering from the recession.

President Obama's December speech in Osawatomie, Kan., which focused on inequality and helping ordinary workers get ahead, should also be seen in this context. There is a renewed commitment — at least in rhetoric — to pursue an economic agenda that advances the interest of the vast majority.

In this context it is striking to see the surge in interest in a financial-speculation tax. This is the sort of measure that gets to the heart of the Occupy agenda. It would strike a big blow directly against the financial speculation that has dominated Wall Street in the last few decades, while raising hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade. The fact that this tax and other comparable measures are now part of the national debate is directly attributable to the Occupy movement.



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the current movement protesting income inequality aims its guns at the wrong targets. As long as that is so, it will not have much of an effect on American politics.

Most Americans aren't interested in redistributing income from the rich to the poor as a way of addressing inequality. They are more interested in living in a society with adequate social mobility — where a person can climb the socioeconomic ladder through talent and hard work. To the extent that envy animates today's anti-inequality movement, it will fail to gain sufficient political traction.

Upward mobility in America today requires an individual to possess adequate amounts of human, social and cultural capital. In order to address the obstacles to upward mobility, we could start by thinking about what I call a different kind of "home economics": the economic consequences of America's changing family structure. The collapse of intact families over the last half-century, manifest in rising numbers of single-parent homes and rising out-of-wedlock birthrates, has eroded vital human and social capital, and it has had baleful economic consequences as a result. This is a problem for which there is no easy solution, but it is a mistake to ignore it as a driver of economic outcomes.

We could also think creatively about another critical institution for inculcating and developing essential human and social capital — schools. There are good ideas across the ideological spectrum for reforming and strengthening schools. But genuine reform will require a period of messy experimentation and trial and error. As a nation we must be open to radical ways of thinking about education as entrepreneurs find new ways of educating students; develop new business, academic and management models; and build new technology.

To the extent that today's movement to protest inequality is comfortable with the educational status quo, it will fail to make a genuine difference.

While relative income and living standards matter, absolute living standards matter most of all. Ask yourself if you'd prefer to live in an unequal country with the living standards of the United States or an equal country with the living standards of Congo. The point is that snapshots of a nation's income inequality matter less over time to a nation's welfare than economic growth and increases in productivity. It's not that income inequality doesn't matter; it's just that many things matter a great deal more.

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nent. Finance-industry executives are pouring money into the campaign of Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass., whom Warren would oppose in the November election if she wins the primary race in September.⁶⁰

"Elizabeth is about 99-1-99," a Wall Street executive, Anthony Scaramucci, managing partner of Skybridge Capital, told *The New York Times*, referring to former Republican presidential primary candidate Herman Cain's "9-9-9" tax plan. "She thinks the 99 percent want to tax the 1 percent 99 percent. It is a failed strategy."⁶¹

The Center for Responsive Politics reports that the securities and investment, law and real-estate industries are among the top five sectors of Brown's campaign contributors.

They account for about \$3.2 million of \$5.3 million in donations Brown has received since he began his national political career, winning a special election in January 2010 for the Senate seat vacated by the death of Democratic Sen. Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy.⁶²

If her Wall Street enemies didn't suffice to link Warren with the Occupy movement, she herself drew the connection in late October soon after entering the primary race. "I created much of the intellectual foundation for what they do," she said of the movement, then in its second month.⁶³

Republicans leapt to attack. A National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee spokesman, Brian Walsh,



Getty Images/Alex Wong

Elizabeth Warren, front-runner for the Democratic nomination for the 2012 Senate election in Massachusetts, is a favorite of the Occupy movement. The Harvard Law School professor gained national attention as a fierce critic of the financial industry. She launched her candidacy after President Obama bowed to massive opposition from Republicans and backed off nominating her to head the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which she largely created.

noted that two Occupy Boston demonstrators had been arrested for allegedly selling heroin. "Professor Warren has yet to comment on whether these were also some of the individuals that she's now claiming to have provided the 'intellectual foundation' for as well," Walsh said in a press release.⁶⁴

Warren then followed up her remark by drawing a line between her campaign and the Occupy movement. "What I meant to say was I've been protesting Wall Street for a long time," she told *The Associated Press*. "The Occupy Wall Street [Movement] is organic, it is independent, and that's how it should be." And she pointedly opposed law-breaking by demonstrators.⁶⁵

But Republicans kept up their strategy of portraying Warren as comrade-in-arms of radical demonstrators. One TV ad produced by an affiliate of American Crossroads, a so-called "super PAC" not subject to funding or spending restrictions for its political advocacy, juxtaposed images of Warren with those of demonstrators, to illustrate that she "sides with extreme left" demonstrators who "attack police, do drugs and trash public parks."⁶⁶

Strikingly, the next ad in the Crossroads campaign took an entirely different tack. Apparently responding to poll data showing voter discontent with banks and big business, the follow-up commercial depicted Warren as overly friendly to Wall Street. The ad focused on Warren's role as staff director of a congressional investigation of Treasury Department administration of the \$700 billion financial industry bailout. "Congress had

Warren oversee how your tax dollars were spent, bailing out the same banks that helped cause the financial meltdown," Crossroads declared.⁶⁷

Warren shot back, calling the charge "ridiculous" in an ad of her own.⁶⁸

'Occupy' and Anti-Semitism

Of all the accusations hurled at the Occupy movement, the potentially most damaging is that it's become an outlet for haters who follow a classic anti-Semitic script by arguing that Jews pull the strings on Wall Street.

Jewish supporters of Occupy responded immediately, noting that an author of the accusation is a Republican strategist. But that conflict has morphed into a debate within the amorphous movement itself over what role it should take, if any, on the conflict between Israel and Palestinians.

The anti-Semitism charge surfaced almost as soon as the movement began. A Web-broadcast video featured clips of anti-Jewish statements and placards from people at Occupy Wall Street.⁶⁹

The video — which also featured cautious expressions of sympathy for the demonstrators by President Obama, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and former New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer — was produced by the Emergency Committee for Israel (ECI), whose chairman, William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, is a prominent Republican of the hawkish neoconservative school.⁷⁰

Aimed at rallying opposition to the movement, the video prompted immediate counterattacks from within the Jewish community.

“It’s an old, discredited tactic: find a couple of unrepresentative people in a large movement and then conflate the oddity with the cause,” said a statement signed by 15 prominent liberal Jewish Occupy supporters. “Occupy Wall Street is a mass protest against rising inequality in America.”⁷¹

The nonpartisan Anti-Defamation League, a nearly century-old organization that fights anti-Semitism, declared in October that “anti-Semitism has not gained traction more broadly with the protesters, nor is it representative of the larger movement at this time.”⁷²

Before long, however, the issue of Occupy and anti-Semitism shifted from an argument between politically opposed foes and supporters of the movement. Activists began arguing over whether the Occupy movement should involve itself in the fight between Israel and the Palestinians. That debate

reawakened the original conflict over Occupy as a refuge for anti-Jewish sentiment, given the long-running debate over when anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian politics cross the line into anti-Semitism. That highly charged issue runs through all debate over Israel, especially on the left and most especially among Jews.

One of the events that prompted the conflict was a Nov. 4 sit-in at the Israeli consulate in Boston by about 20 Occupy members who had marched from a downtown encampment in Dewey Square.⁷³

The action was intended to support a failed attempt to bring supplies by ship to Gaza, a Palestinian enclave under Israeli military control, in defiance of an Israeli maritime blockade. In New York, Occupy Wall Street issued a Nov. 3 tweet of support for the blockade-running effort. But the tweet was deleted, on the grounds that the entire Occupy Wall Street movement hadn’t taken a position on the matter, the nonpartisan JTA news service on Jewish affairs reported.⁷⁴

Some in the movement were demanding that it oppose Israeli policies. But Daniel Sieradski, an Occupy activist who organized Occupy Judaism, which held Jewish services at Zuccotti Park, has been working to keep Occupy open to supporters as well as foes of Israeli policy by keeping the movement out of Middle Eastern matters. “We are being sidetracked by some in our community and some outside our community who are insisting on integrating this into the Occupy Wall Street platform,” Sieradski told JTA.⁷⁵

A long piece in the neoconservative monthly *Commentary* criticized that approach as a dodge to avoid grappling with the challenges posed by anti-Israel sentiment on the left — often, the Jewish left. “The blind quest for ‘social justice’ in its left-wing understanding, despite the onslaught of leftist hatred for the Jewish people and the Jewish state, demonstrates the degree to which too many Jews over-

look or excuse the indefensible,” wrote Jonathan Neumann, a fellow at the magazine who specializes in the Middle East.⁷⁶

One of the targets of Neumann’s criticism, staff writer Marc Tracy of *Tablet*, an online magazine on Jewish affairs, responded: “The main reason I did not enjoy seeing certain OWS [Occupy Wall Street] protests adopting an anti-Zionist agenda is because I saw neither the relevance nor the connection between anti-Zionism and OWS’s ‘1 percent’ message, and I didn’t see the connection because I am in fact a Zionist who also supports OWS’s economic message.”⁷⁷ ■

OUTLOOK

New Progressive Era?

Of all the forecasts about the possible future of the Occupy movement, one of the most far-reaching comes from Jeffrey D. Sachs, an influential economist who directs the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

“A third progressive era is likely to be in the making,” Sachs wrote in *The New York Times* in November. The Occupy movement, he argued, is harbinger and engine of a 21st-century version of the periods of the late 1800s and early 1900s and the 1930s characterized by sweeping social and regulatory legislation.⁷⁸

“Twice before in American history, powerful corporate interests dominated Washington and brought America to a state of unacceptable inequality, instability and corruption,” Sachs wrote. “Both times a social and political movement arose to restore democracy and shared prosperity.”⁷⁹

Kazin, the Georgetown University historian and veteran of the 1960s anti-war movement, offers a more cautious assessment. “Movements of this kind,” he says, “especially ones that are this

fluid and rise quickly, may also fragment quickly." He adds, however, that the large community of activist young people suddenly made visible by Occupy is likely to remain engaged, given the persistence of the economic conditions underlying the movement.

If Kazin is wary of declaring the dawn of a new age, he has the experience of having written in 1999 that the anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle likely represented the birth of a new populist movement.⁸⁰ Yet Kazin in that piece may simply have been ahead of his time. "Something like Occupy would have come much sooner if not for 9/11," says Muldoon, the CWA union member working with the Occupy movement in New York. "It was like someone threw the emergency brake."

As for the future, Muldoon says, "I think you'll be able to look back and say that things shifted." She adds, "Some of this is up to us about how significant a shift."

Also up to the movement and its tentative allies in the Democratic Party is whether and how to bridge the profound differences between believers and nonbelievers in the two-party system.

Columbia University's Gitlin acknowledged: "Of course, it's also conceivable that the structural divergences are so great that they can't be bridged. Sometimes these things blow up and leave everything in ruins."⁸¹

Among Occupy opponents, Bossie of Citizens United, the producer of conservative videos, describes in a tone of deep satisfaction what he says will be the short and unremembered life of Occupy. "I don't think the movement had any effect except to tell the American people just what they don't want America to become," he says.

Alliances with conventional politicians are doomed, Bossie says. "The leftist politicians are now trying to distance themselves from it, because they understand the American people are so turned off by this really sick movement."

Davis, the former Democratic congressman, who describes himself as a centrist, argues that the movement's future depends on whether activists decide to remain outside the conventional political system. "You can influence society simply by making a point over and over again, which is relatively easy to do," he says. "Influencing politics is much harder. It requires mobilizing people, keeping them energized, raising money, building a structure."

Moreover, he says, the movement will have to develop a clearer analysis of America's ills — moving beyond frequently voiced complaints about the burdens of college loans. "I haven't heard Occupy Wall Street spend any time talking about 35 million children being income-insecure," he says, "Those children have a higher moral priority than people paying student loans."

Occupy's future also depends on the nature of authorities' response, argues the CWA's Dubnau. Repression, he notes, has been known to radicalize its targets.

Dubnau cites widely circulated video footage of a University of California, Davis, police officer squirting pepper spray into the faces of students conducting a peaceful sit-in on campus.⁸² "You get pepper-sprayed," he says, "you're going to come out a different person." ■

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