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Anti-Wall Street Protests Spreading to Cities Large and Small

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#) and [TIMOTHY WILLIAMS](#)

A loose-knit populist campaign that started on Wall Street three weeks ago has spread to dozens of cities across the country, with protesters camped out in Los Angeles near City Hall, assembled before the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago and marching through downtown Boston to rally against corporate greed, unemployment and the role of financial institutions in the economic crisis.

With little organization and a reliance on Facebook, Twitter and Google groups to share methods, the [Occupy Wall Street](#) campaign, as the prototype in New York is called, has clearly tapped into a deep vein of anger, experts in social movements said, bringing longtime crusaders against globalization and professional anarchists together with younger people frustrated by poor job prospects.

“Rants based on discontents are the first stage of any movement,” said Michael Kazin, a professor of history at Georgetown University. But he said it was unclear if the current protests would lead to a lasting movement, which would require the newly unleashed passions to be channeled into institutions and shaped into political goals.

Publicity surrounding the recent arrests of hundreds in New York, near Wall Street and on the Brooklyn Bridge, has only energized the campaign. This week, new rallies and in some cases urban

encampments are planned for cities as disparate as Memphis, Tenn.; Hilo, Hawaii; Minneapolis; Baltimore; and McAllen, Tex., according to [Occupy Together](#), an unofficial hub for the protests that lists dozens of coming demonstrations, including some in Europe and Japan.

In the nation's capital, an Occupy D.C. movement began on Saturday, with plans to join forces on Thursday with a similar anticorporate and antiwar group, October 2011, for an encampment in a park near the White House.

About 100 mostly younger people, down from 400 over the weekend, were camped outside Los Angeles City Hall on Monday morning. Several dozen tents occupied the lawn along with a free-food station and a media center. People sat on blankets playing the guitar or bongo drums or meditating. Next to a "Food Not Bombs" sign, was another that read "Food Not Banks."

At the donations table, Elise Whitaker, 21, a freelance script editor and film director, said the protesters were united in their desire for "a more equal economy."

"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," she said, adding that she was not against capitalism per se.

Javier Rodriguez, 24, a former student at Pasadena City College, held a sign that read "Down with the World Bank" in Spanish, and said he was anti-capitalist.

"The monetary system is not working," he said. "The banks are here to steal from us. Everybody is in debt whether it's medical bills or school or loans. People are getting fed up with it."

In Chicago on Monday morning, about a dozen people outside the Federal Reserve Bank sat on the ground or lay in sleeping bags, surrounded by protest signs and hampers filled with donated food and blankets. The demonstrators, who have been in Chicago since Sept. 24, said they had collected so much food that they started giving the surplus to homeless people.

Each evening, the number of protesters swells as people come from school or work, and the group marches to Michigan Avenue.

“We all have different ideas about what this means, stopping corporate greed,” said Paul Bucklaw, 45. “For me, it’s about the banks.”

Sean Richards, 21, a junior studying environmental health at Illinois State University in Normal, said he dropped out of college on Friday and took a train to Chicago to demonstrate against oil companies.

He said he would continue sleeping on the street for “as long as it takes.”

Strategists on the left said they were buoyed by the outpouring of energy and hoped it would contribute to a newly powerful progressive movement. Robert Borosage, co-director of the Campaign for America’s Future, in Washington, noted that the Wall Street demonstrations followed protests in Wisconsin this year over efforts to suppress public employee unions and numerous rallies on economic and employment issues.

The new protesters have shown a remarkable commitment and have stayed nonviolent in the face of aggressive actions by the New York police, he said. “I think that as a result they really touched a chord among activists across the country.”

But if the movement is to have lasting impact, it will have to develop leaders and clear demands, said Nina Eliasoph, a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California.

With the country in such deep economic distress, almost everyone is forced to think about economics and politics, giving the new protests a “major emotional resonance,” she said.

“So there is a tension between this emotionally powerful movement,” she said, “and the emptiness of the message itself so far.”

Ashley Southall contributed reporting from Washington, Ian Lovett from Los Angeles and Steven Yaccino from Chicago.



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