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Occupied Territory: Wall Street or Welfare Street?

It is about time people started protesting 9% plus unemployment. For that matter, it is good to see that people are concerned about insiders being able to use their government connections to line their pockets with taxpayer money. Should banks which made really stupid loans only to be bailed out by taxpayers be protested? Sure, why not? Real capitalists believe that people should profit from great business decisions and fail when they make poor ones. Did politically connected people privatize banking profits and socialize banking losses? Most definitely.

I have heard conservative commentators complain that people should be protesting the government rather than private businesses; that it isn’t businesses’ fault that the government handed them money. I disagree with the statement that private companies should not be a focus of protests. The Boston Tea Party was a protest of government policy that handed out monopoly contracts to private firms, in this case for tea. Rather than protest King George, colonists protested the tea company. Unfortunately, the colonists disrespected property rights and violently destroyed personal private property.

To the extent that Occupy Wall Street aims to protest the use of government connections to line the pockets of politically connected producers, I support it. Of course, if that really was their chief complaint then they would be parked outside of Solyndra protesting the abuse of taxpayer money by a politically connected firm. They would be occupying farms to protest farm subsidies. They would be marching on Detroit and the UAW headquarters to complain that their political lobbying has cost taxpayers billions of dollars. Not only are they not marching on the UAW headquarters, the labor movement has joined the protests. I’m not sure which is funnier, union members complaining about undue political influence of special interest groups or rich college kids at elite private schools protesting income inequality.

It is too bad the Occupy Wall Street movement has gotten sidetracked. I guess it is hard to keep your focus with all the [sex and drug use occurring at the protests](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2047664/Occupy-Wall-Street-Children-1-good-time-protests.html). I have to admit I have never witnessed such protests accompanied so readily by chants to re-elect the incumbent president. That seems weird. “The government is bought and paid for by the top 1%, so let’s get really upset and re-elect the incumbent president who has set fundraising records by tapping into the money of the top 1%!” At least Vietnam protesters didn’t call for Lyndon Johnson’s re-election.

Today, the Occupy Wall Street movement went to protest in front of rich people’s homes. They shifted gears to complain about income inequality. “How dare people who create wealth and employ people by creating thousands of jobs be rewarded for their hard work? What about the people who don’t bother to create wealth? They deserve just as much wealth.” They lost me here. On the one hand they want jobs, while on the other hand they really despise job creators. They want to have their cake and eat the bakers too.

If you are in an occupying mood but dislike military imperialism, I do have some helpful alternatives outside of occupying Wall Street. After all, to protest all financial institutions is to complain that the function of lining up savers and borrowers to build capital is immoral. To protest capital creation is to protest job creation. Aren’t the protesters supposedly concerned about job creation? Anyway, here are some alternatives:

Occupy Academia: People should protest the lack of education they are getting in most American schools. US math, science, and critical thinking skills are abysmal. I suppose that is why many in the Occupy Wall Street movement think that their arguments are coherent. Let’s begin with occupying the offices of Keynesian economics professors who taught a generation or two of politicians that wasting taxpayer money was a good idea.

Occupy Pennsylvania Avenue and Capitol Hill: Can we please protest the existing political class for handing out taxpayer money to special interest groups? Americans should just sit outside the White House until the tax code is simplified so that the same tax rates apply to all Americans regardless of their political leanings or connections. How about a sit in until they balance a budget?

Occupy Welfare Street: Let’s march on public housing projects and in front of people’s houses who receive taxpayer money only to watch TV all day. Let’s chant, “Get your hands out of my pocket!” or, “What jobs have you created lately?” If a class war is what people want, (with the end goal of job creation to lower the unemployment rate) would it be better to side with the job creating class or the never created a job in their lives class? I think the former. It should be every American’s duty to go create jobs, not the government’s. Why are you owed a job if you have never created one? Jobs don’t just grow on trees. Am I entitled to ice cream if I have never milked a cow? If so, why? Just because other people have milked cows why am I owed ice cream?

This is all to say that there is plenty to protest in our economy today. I appreciate that the Occupy Wall Street crowd might make a valid point here and there between hits. Still, it would be nice if they could focus on why they feel disenfranchised. Too often our government has sold out the average taxpayer to favor special interest groups. Maybe they should protest government. Oh wait, there’s already a group doing that. I think they call it the Tea Party.