

Profits more precious than life

written by Stephen Millies

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People wait in line to be tested for coronavirus outside Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens, N.Y., on March 24.

We hold this truth to be self-evident: that Donald Trump doesn't give a damn about the millions of workers who've lost their jobs because of the coronavirus shutdown. So why does Trump want to wind up the absolutely necessary emergency measures needed to prevent the spread of this pandemic?

Doesn't the Donald realize that anybody can catch it? Even British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prince Charles are sick. So far, three members of the U.S. Congress have the virus.

For the capitalist class, preserving profits is more important than saving lives, even possibly their own. Wealthy parasites consider the loss of some of their capital to be a fate worse than death.

The defeated French slave masters in Haiti had a chance to escape on two vessels owned by Philadelphia shipowner Stephen Girard. Instead of fleeing, they filled the ships with gold plates and other valuable property.

Jean-Jacques Dessalines administered justice to these torturers and murderers. Girard sold the loot and ended up as the wealthiest person in the United States.

Dr. Huey P. Newton, who founded the Black Panther Party with Bobby Seale, called this behavior "avaricious," meaning extremely greedy.

Karl Marx quoted T.J. Dunning about the lengths that the rich will go in order to make a profit. "With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 percent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 percent certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent, positive audacity; 100 percent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 percent, and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged."

The banker J.P. Morgan named his yacht the Corsair in honor of a reputed ancestor, Henry Morgan the Pirate, who risked being hanged. A legacy is the JPMorgan Chase Bank with \$2.7 trillion in assets.

Better dead than red

To be sure, not everyone is in the same boat when it comes to the coronavirus. For millions in homeless shelters and prisons, the virus is a possible death sentence. For [28 million people](#) in the U.S. without health insurance, it's more frightening than it is to the pig in the White House.

Donald Trump isn't alone in claiming "the cure is worse than the disease." Former Wells Fargo CEO Dick Kovacevich [wants people to go back to their jobs](#), whatever the consequences. "Some of them will get sick, some may even die, I don't know," said the current executive at Cisco and Cargill.

The Wall Street Journal on March 25 ran an editorial and three opinion pieces demanding a rapid end to the current public health efforts to stop the pandemic. It's laughable to read the Journal's editorial lamenting the "excess suicides" committed during the last recession and their possible rise now.

Has the Wall Street Journal ever shown any concern for the unemployed? They're a cheerleader for cutbacks in SNAP benefits, formerly known as food stamps.

The coronavirus is so dangerous that in-person trading in the supreme temple of capitalist accumulation — the New York Stock Exchange — was moved off-site and is being done electronically. Some of New York City's wealthy have [fled to the countryside](#). Don't the Wall Street Journal's editors realize they could die too?

Well, what's the attitude of the billionaire class towards nuclear war? Won't H-bombs incinerate both the poor and the polo-playing set?

Many capitalist leaders thought nuclear war was winnable. War criminal Henry Kissinger became famous for writing “Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy,” which contemplated using tactical nuclear weapons.

During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the toilet seat covers in the offices of the reactionary National Review were painted with the slogan “better dead than red.” The magazine’s editors were euphoric about the impending nuclear Armageddon that could wipe out the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist camp.

By most accounts, President John F. Kennedy and his brother Attorney General Bobby Kennedy stood alone in not wanting war. The rest of the cabinet, as well as the Pentagon brass, wanted to attack. War was averted, but eventually both JFK and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated.

Letting grandma and grandpa die

The most repulsive argument for ending the quarantines and business closures is that while younger people can supposedly withstand the coronavirus, “only” older folk will die. Why waste ventilators on them?

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick put these thoughts more artfully on the fascist Tucker Carlson’s Fox News show. “Let’s get back to work,” [said the Texas statesman](#), “... and those of us who are 70 plus, we’ll take care of ourselves. But don’t sacrifice the country.”

California lawyer Scott McMillan was more blunt. [He tweeted](#), “The fundamental problem is whether we are going to tank the entire economy to save 2.5 percent of the population which is (1) generally expensive to maintain, and (2) not productive.”

Hitler would have described this “2.5 percent of the population” as “useless feeders.” Disabled people are also more vulnerable to the coronavirus. Nazis sterilized or murdered hundreds of thousands of disabled people.

This sort of talk isn't too popular. But to the capitalist class, the elderly, like old machines, should be sent to the junkyard.

A mile from where this writer lives in Queens, N.Y., [13 people died of the coronavirus](#) in the Elmhurst Hospital Center on March 24. A refrigerator truck holds the bodies. A long line of people waits outside the facility to be tested.

Also dying on March 24 was Kiouss Kelly, a nursing manager at Manhattan's Mount Sinai West Hospital. Medical workers there have been [forced to use garbage bags](#) as personal protective equipment.

The capitalist state is incapable of stopping this pandemic before many more lives are lost. Poor and working people have to organize ourselves to fight it. Playing a vanguard role are nurses and other health care workers.

The great revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg declared over a century ago that the choice for humanity was either socialism or barbarism. Today, the choice is socialism or war and pandemics.



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