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Billionaires got a trillion. We get \$600.

written by Stephen Millies
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Cars line up at a food distribution site for those impacted by the coronavirus pandemic in Inglewood, California.

After months of doing nothing, the super Scrooge Congress finally provided a little help for poor and working people. We desperately need it.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed over 320,000 people in the United States. Black, Indigenous and Latinx people are [almost three times as likely to die](#) from it.

The real number of unemployed was at least 30 million people In October, [according to Dr. Heidi Shierholz](#), former chief economist of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Eight million more people have been pushed below the official poverty line since June. Close to 28 million adults — and millions of children — live in [hungry households](#). Landlords and banksters want to launch a tidal wave of evictions and foreclosures.

So [what did we get](#)? Eleven weeks of \$300-per-week supplemental unemployment checks. The moratorium on evictions and home foreclosures will be extended until Jan. 31, 2021 — the middle of winter.

And a [\\$600 “stimulus” check](#) that will last an average family who rents an apartment or house just 11 days. [Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley](#), a member of The Squad, rightfully calls this money “survival” checks.

This absolutely needed yet criminally delayed assistance for millions of poor and working people is chump change to what billionaires have stolen. Between March and November of 2020, the [647 U.S. billionaires](#) grabbed another \$960 billion.

That’s enough money to give \$15,000 checks to 64 million poor and working families. Instead, Jeff Bezos deposited another \$70 billion in his piggy bank. All of Bezos’ loot is produced by Amazon workers, 20,000 of whom have caught COVID-19.

Three members of the Walton family — who own Walmart and the state of Arkansas — added another \$48 billion to their pile. Yet Walmart refuses to provide hazard pay

to its 1.4 million U.S. employees.

Then there's Mr. Grinch himself, John Tyson, CEO of Tyson Foods. The dead animal capitalist [gained another \\$800 million](#) while 11,000 Tyson workers were infected with the coronavirus.

They don't really care about us

Why did Congress dawdle for almost six months after the last set of assistance measures expired at the end of July? Even the airlines and mass transit agencies were screaming for help.

The aid that finally dribbled out was \$50 billion less than what 647 billionaires had grabbed while 320,000 nonbillionaires died of the coronavirus. Paid leave for workers with COVID-19 was blocked.

But another [\\$696 billion could be found for the Pentagon](#). As Michael Jackson pointed out, they don't really care about us.

It was no different 90 years ago at the start of the Great Depression. Then, President Herbert Hoover claimed he was given the following advice by Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon: "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate."

Isn't that what's happened in the last six months? Hundreds of thousands of small and not-so-small businesses have gone to the wall with millions of workers losing their jobs.

Meanwhile, the big banks are doing swell. Among them is the Bank of New York Mellon with \$381 billion in assets.

As Larry Kudlow — Trump's \$185,000-per-year director of the National Economic

Council — once said, [“Recessions are therapeutic.”](#)

It was cleanup time for Big Capital. [“One capitalist always kills many,”](#) was how Karl Marx, the founder of scientific socialism, described the process. More important was the drive to further impoverish the working class. Capitalists wanted to force workers to take any job and lower wages even more.

Many on Wall Street and in Congress even blamed the original \$600-per-week supplemental unemployment checks for the Black Lives Matter movement.

They figured the only reason that 26 million people protested police murders was that they had nothing to do and cash in their pocket. Kudlow claimed that extending the \$600 checks was a [“disincentive”](#) for people to try to find a job.

The beds never get cold

Kudlow’s remarks echo those of his class. In their country clubs and mansions, they tell each other that the working class is lazy and has to be compelled by hunger, evictions and police terror to take any job.

They not only don’t really care about us, they have no idea how millions of people live.

On Dec. 19, three people died in a fire that spread through a crowded building in the Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens, N.Y. This tragedy occurred less than a mile from the Elmhurst Medical Center, where, in the springtime, refrigerator trucks stored the bodies of those who died of COVID-19.

According to [City Councilperson Daniel Dromm](#), “Many of the inhabitants [of the burned building] are immigrants who share beds, switching off for 12 hours at a time while they are working, because they cannot afford to live in better conditions.”

Those were the conditions of the working class in Britain 200 years ago. Here's how John Fielden, a capitalist himself, described them:

"The profits of manufacturers were enormous; but this only whetted the appetite that it should have satisfied, and therefore the manufacturers had recourse to an expedient that seemed to secure to them those profits without any possibility of limit; they began the practice of what is termed "night-working," that is, having tired one set of hands, by working them throughout the day, they had another set ready to go on working throughout the night; the day-set getting into the beds that the night-set had just quitted, and in their turn again, the night-set getting into the beds that the day-set quitted in the morning. It is a common tradition in Lancashire, that the beds 'never get cold'." [\(Quoted by Marx in "Capital."\)](#)

"Power concedes nothing without a demand," declared Frederick Douglass. It was the fear of what millions of suddenly unemployed workers might do that forced Trump and Congress to provide \$600 weekly unemployment checks and a \$1,200 stimulus check in the springtime.

We need to make them fear us again. The year 2021 will be a year of struggle.

