

Ruling by decree: Trump interrupts golf game to issue executive orders

written by Struggle - La Lucha

August 12, 2020



Donald Trump at his Bedminster, N.J., golf club, Aug. 7. He'd gone on vacation because the stimulus negotiations with Congress had stalled.

No relief in sight

On Aug. 7, President Donald Trump interrupted his game of golf at his course in New Jersey to announce four executive orders he says will provide economic relief for struggling workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and depression-level unemployment. So far it's unclear exactly when or how that will happen. It is clear that none of it would provide any kind of relief for more than a

few weeks at most.

Trump has been ruling by decree ever since he took office, never even pretending to propose bills to Congress, the mythological way that a president is supposed to act in the U.S. Actually, U.S. presidents have been ruling by decree at least since the end of World War II, when the functional power to declare war was assumed by President Harry Truman to send troops into a war on Korea. Executive orders have almost replaced laws enacted by Congress.

There have been constant wars since the 1950s, but none of them authorized by Congress. Presidents have been ruling by decree. George W. Bush issued 291 executive orders in 8 years, the most of any U.S. president. Bill Clinton issued 254 and Barack Obama issued 276. The previous presidents were not as open about it as Trump has been. Trump has issued 177 executive orders as of August 3 and his term has another 5 months to go.

The U.S. Constitution, however, authorizes only Congress to declare war and only Congress to establish laws. The president is supposed to “execute” what Congress has passed. They call it the rule of law over the rule of a supreme commander or monarch.

Congress — and, in particular, the House of Representatives — also has the “power of the purse,” the ability to tax and spend public money for the national government, not the president. Instead we have rule by decree which appears to now include taxes and spending.

On Trump’s executive orders offering “relief”

1. \$400 ... \$300 .. \$??? disappearing unemployment benefits

Instead of actually extending the \$600 supplemental federal unemployment

assistance that unemployed workers have been receiving weekly under the CARES Act that Congress passed in March, Trump claimed his executive order would give \$400 in weekly assistance. Funding is to come from \$44 billion in disaster relief funds from the Department of Homeland Security.

Trump had said in his announcement that it'd be \$400, but on Aug. 11 the Washington Post reported: "President Trump's senior aides acknowledged on Tuesday that they are providing less financial assistance for the unemployed than the president initially advertised ... the maneuver only guarantees an extra \$300 per week for unemployed Americans."

Even that amount is being questioned, as most of the \$44 billion disaster relief funds may have already been spent.

State unemployment benefits are frightfully low, an average of \$378 weekly. It's a starvation rate, and only half of what federal guidelines say is the poverty level for a household of four. Most states provide 26 weeks of state unemployment insurance, but for workers who lost their jobs during the major business shutdowns in March and haven't been able to return to work, that will run out this month or next.

The federal weekly \$600 payments that went to unemployed workers in all states expired on July 31.

Trump's executive order goes outside the usual unemployment insurance system, so something new has to be established that will likely take months for states to implement.

Even if it is implemented, the jobless benefits won't go to those in greatest need. Only the unemployed who are receiving more than \$100 a week in state unemployment insurance are eligible for the federal aid. That means that those at the bottom of the income distribution — particularly workers who rely on tips and

the self-employed — will get no federal benefit at all. Those workers are estimated to be at least 15 percent of those who've lost their jobs since March.

2. Payroll tax “holiday” could gut Medicare and Social Security

One of Trump's four executive orders directs the Treasury secretary to defer payroll taxes through the end of the year, with the media calling it a payroll tax holiday. The payroll taxes fund Medicare and Social Security.

Payroll taxes are paid by both employers and workers, each contributing half the total. The deferral means it has to be paid later to the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, by the end of 2021.

Trump says he wants to make the deferral permanent, after he gets his re-election in place. “Permanent” means the trust funds would never see the money restored. That would mean an end of the Social Security and Medicare programs.

Also, if workers have their tax “deferred,” that would show up as a wage “increase” to the IRS, meaning higher income taxes to be paid in April 2021.

3. Order on evictions and foreclosures is all smoke

As many as 40 million face eviction by the end of the year, according to researchers in a paper published Aug. 7 by the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#).

Because of the massive job and income losses in the pandemic, anywhere from 29 percent to 43 percent of all renter households in the U.S. face eviction, the researchers wrote. In some states, including Mississippi and Louisiana, more than half of all renter households could be at risk.

Trump's housing executive order is the most meaningless of the four. It simply says it is important to keep people in their homes during the pandemic, particularly so

they can successfully socially distance themselves from others and prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

“It is the policy of the United States to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, residential evictions and foreclosures during the ongoing COVID-19 national emergency,” the order says.

The executive order does not actually prohibit any evictions or foreclosures.

The CARES Act included a 120-day eviction moratorium for renters who were living in a property with a federally guaranteed mortgage and for renters in federal housing assistance programs. That moratorium ended on July 24. In addition, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that the federal moratorium didn’t cover approximately 31.4 million renter households, so there were thousands of evictions during this moratorium period.

The CARES Act also provided foreclosure relief for owners of single-family homes which had a federally guaranteed mortgage. The Federal Housing Finance Agency had extended that program, but it ends on Aug. 31.

4. A short student loan deferral

The CARES Act help for student loan borrowers was set to expire at the end of September, so Trump’s order extends his policy to set the Department of Education loan interest rates to zero percent and let borrowers defer payments through the end of 2020. Or possibly earlier, as the order says: “It is therefore appropriate to extend this policy until such time that the economy has stabilized, schools have reopened and the crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided.”

What determines the economy has “stabilized”? Do all schools have to reopen, or just a few?



Brooklyn says STOP evictions!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Aug. 4 — The threat of heavy rain on account of tropical storm Isaias didn't stop over a hundred people from rallying in front of Brooklyn's civil court this morning at 141 Livingston Street.

People started to gather before 8:30 a.m. The protestors, many of whom were from the Crown Heights Tenants Union, were determined to stop the evictions that are coming.

Federal and state moratoriums on evictions are expiring. Millions of people across the country, including hundreds of thousands in Brooklyn, N.Y., are in danger of being homeless.

There's nothing civil about the Livingston Street eviction mill. Unlike criminal courts, tenants don't have to be provided with an attorney while landlords can always afford a legal mouthpiece. What sort of equal justice is that?

Longtime tenant activist Marcela Mitaynes pointed out that 14 judges keep busy by

kicking families out of their home. Only one of them hears complaints about landlords whose buildings are often iceboxes in the winter and ovens in the summer, with paint peeling and cockroaches the year round.

Mitaynes is now running for the state assembly from the 51st district in Brooklyn's Sunset Park neighborhood.

A speakout was held on Livingston. Furniture was put on the sidewalk to show how ugly and vicious an eviction looks.

People then took to the streets to march to the New York Supreme Court at 320 Jay Street. Along the way, a bus operator, a member of Transit Workers Union local 100, honked a horn in support.

Jenny Wong led chants in front of the family court's entrance despite a half-dozen hovering police. After picketing there, the marchers went back to the civil court. Michael Hollinsworth raised the necessity of organizing rapid response teams to halt evictions.

More actions will be held there on Aug. 5 and 6. Protests are scheduled throughout New York City.

The power of the people will stop evictions and foreclosures!

SLL photos: Stephen Millies



Millions face eviction or foreclosure. The people can stop it!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

August 12, 2020

A wave of evictions and foreclosures is coming that can throw millions of people into the street. The federal ban on kicking people out of their apartments and houses — which only applied to properties with U.S. government-backed mortgages — has already expired.

So have many of the state and local moratoriums on evictions and foreclosures, although some have been extended into August. As many as 24 million people are at risk of being homeless by the end of September. Part of the Columbus, Ohio, convention center is being turned into an evictions court.

Most of those endangered are Black or Latinx. Asian, Indigenous and poor white families also face disaster.

Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau reveal the size of the looming catastrophe.

Close to 24 million families have little or no confidence that they'll be able to pay their August rent.

Almost [15 million homeowners](#) doubt they can make their August mortgage payment.

[Thirty-two percent of families](#) were not able to pay their July rent or mortgage payment on time.

A housing crisis was raging before the coronavirus pandemic erupted. The hundreds of thousands of homeless people living on the street or in shelters are just the tip of the iceberg. In 2019, there were [114,000 homeless students](#) attending New York City schools.

Rent accounts for over half of the budgets of the poorest fifth of all families. Almost one in every two households forked over [at least 30 percent of their income](#) to their landlord or the bank holding their mortgage.

High rents force many families to live in overcrowded housing. That's one reason why so many Black, Indigenous and Latinx people are dying of COVID-19.

None of the overcrowding and rent gouging are the result of a housing shortage. Greedy landlords in New York City keep [a quarter million apartments empty](#) in order to jack up the rent. That's as criminal as hoarding food during a famine.

Fight back!

[Thirty million people are unemployed.](#) That's almost a fifth of the U.S. workforce.

An economic crisis was starting even before the coronavirus hit. Don't believe the hype about a rapid economic recovery. Many millions will continue to be jobless.

Yet Congress let the \$600 weekly supplemental unemployment compensation

program die. These payments were used by families to pay their rent or mortgage. What are they supposed to do now?

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Unemployed Councils organized by communists fought evictions. When a sheriff tried to carry out an eviction, dozens or hundreds of council members were there to move a family's furniture back into their home.

Such actions forced Chicago's Mayor Anton Cermak to ban evictions. With people on the move, Congress passed a National Housing Act in 1934. It saved many people's homes from being foreclosed by the banksters.

It has been the Black Lives Matter movement, with millions of people in the street, that forced the capitalist government to do anything at all. Wannabe dictator Trump is trying to crush the struggle by sending his stormtroopers to Portland, Ore.; Seattle; Chicago; Kansas City, Mo.; and elsewhere.

But the heroic Wall of Moms in Portland pushed Trump back. We need a wall of people around the home of every family that the landlords are trying to evict. A wall of people can stop the banksters from stealing a family's house through foreclosure.

That's what housing groups and community organizations across the country want to do. They have to be supported. We have to organize, organize, organize!

The labor movement has to speak out, just as many union leaders have endorsed the Black Lives Matter movement.

We need a new solidarity day. The AFL-CIO should call demonstrations demanding a continuation of unlimited \$600 per week supplemental unemployment benefits and a halt to evictions and foreclosures.

Nobody's home is foreclosed nor is anyone ever evicted in socialist Cuba. One of the

first acts of the Cuban Revolution was to limit a family's combined rent and utility bill to no more than 10 percent of their income.

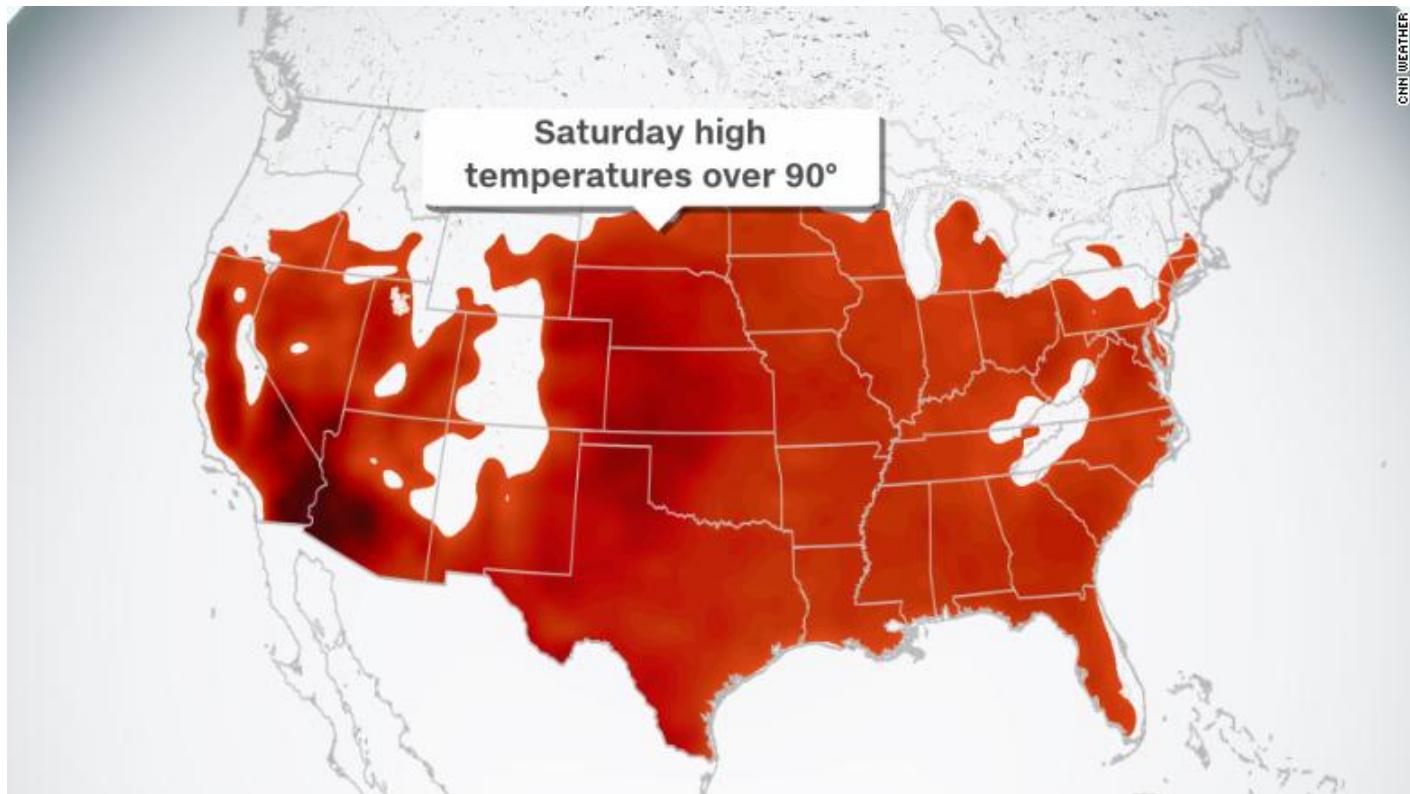
That's what we need. Landlords and banksters need to be abolished along with the racist police.

We have to fight like Dr. King fought. The power of the people can stop evictions and foreclosures.



Capitalist heat wave = death. Air conditioning for all!

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As COVID-19 continues to kill hundreds of people every day in the United States, a summer heat wave will also be a big killer.

Twenty-five years ago, at least 739 people died in Chicago during a heat wave in July 1995. Nobody had to die even though the temperature reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit. People perished because they or their families couldn't afford air conditioning.

Like the current coronavirus pandemic, the heat wave wasn't an equal opportunity killer. Deaths were concentrated in Chicago's Black and Latinx communities.

Many of the victims were elderly. Children are also more likely to die during a heat wave. Almost all the victims were poor.

Chicago's mayor, Richard M. Daley, doubted that the sharp increase of [deaths could](#)

[be caused by the heat](#), as shown in the graphic documentary about the 1995 heat wave called “Cooked: Survival by Zip Code.”

His corrupt political machine did nothing. Daley’s father — Mayor Richard J. Daley — had Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark assassinated in 1969.

Heat kills more people than tornadoes and hurricanes combined. [Every year](#), 12,000 people in the U.S. may die from extreme heat.

Big cities are the greatest heat traps. The late Puerto Rican communist Milton Vera explained to this writer how large buildings store and shed heat, raising the urban temperature. So does the asphalt and concrete on streets and sidewalks.

Scientists call densely populated cities like New York “heat islands.” Poverty and racism keep many Black and Latinx families in crowded neighborhoods. Landlords feast on these conditions to collect even more rent.

The [current year](#) may be one of the five hottest in recorded history according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Capitalist climate change is cooking the earth.

Workplaces are also dangerous. Between 1992 and 2016, some 783 workers died from heat exposure and over 69,000 workers suffered serious injuries from it, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These figures are underestimates.

Among those who died was the [California farmworker Asunción Valdivia](#). He had been picking grapes for 10 hours straight when he collapsed in the 105 degree Fahrenheit heat.

Amazon owner Jeff Bezos is [the richest person on earth](#) with a pile worth \$171 billion. That’s more than the yearly income of 3 million four-person households with

the median income of about \$60,000 in the U.S.

But Bezos is absolutely stingy when it comes to protecting Amazon workers, who produce all his wealth. During a 2011 heat wave, Amazon workers were forced to work overtime in the company's big Allentown, Pa., warehouse.

Instead of shutting down the warehouse for a few days — or installing better ventilation — Amazon thoughtfully [stationed ambulances at the gates](#). Any employees who suffered heat stroke could be whisked to a hospital. Meanwhile, the conveyor belts and forklifts would continue to operate.

Air conditioning is a necessity

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on May 15 that the city will provide 74,000 air conditioners to low income seniors. Twenty-two thousand would be installed in housing projects. Cooling centers will be set up.

De Blasio also said that the city was asking the state's Public Service Commission to subsidize electric bills for 450,000 people so they can afford to run the air conditioners.

That's mighty kind, Mr. Mayor. But the \$127 million that was allocated is barely 2 percent of the \$6 billion police department budget.

It's also about 2 percent of the nearly [\\$6 billion in tax breaks](#) given to the Hudson Yards luxury development on Manhattan's West Side. The cheapest one bedroom apartment at Hudson Yards goes for over \$1 million.

Extreme heat and extreme cold are dire health emergencies, just like the coronavirus. Don't expect the Trump regime or any other U.S. capitalist government to help.

The wealthy and powerful let Black and poor people drown and starve in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Cuba's socialist government evacuates millions of people before a hurricane strikes.

While over 140,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the U.S. as of July 21, just 87 people have died in Cuba.

To survive the heat wave the people have to mobilize. The Black Lives Matter movement has shown us how. Here's what we need:

1. Free air conditioners to all who need them. Open the hotels and other fancy private buildings as places for people to cool off.
2. Stop all utility shut-offs and restore service to all who have been cut off. Shutting off water to a family can be as deadly as cutting off their electricity.
3. Limit a family's combined rent and utility bills to 10 percent of their income. This was one of the first measures of the Cuban Revolution.

Poor and working people can win these demands just like we won Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. The people united will never be defeated!



Unemployment crisis: It's about to get worse

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At the end of July, the extra \$600 per week in expanded unemployment benefits will expire. Congress has not acted to extend the benefits or provide anything in its place.

But nearly [half of the U.S. population is still jobless](#), and millions will remain jobless for the foreseeable future.

The July 17 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report marked the 17th straight week that unemployment filings topped one million. Until the present crisis, the most new claims in a single week had been 695,000 in 1982.

The July 17 report says that 1.5 million newly laid off contract and gig workers filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits the week ending July 11. That's an increase from the 1.4 million the week before.

In total, 14.3 million workers continue to claim benefits under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, accounting for 45 percent of all workers continuing to claim benefits under state and federal unemployment programs. The PUA program ends the last week of July unless Congress passes an extension.

The total number of workers who continued to claim state and federal unemployment compensation, the BLS report says, is 32 million. It was the second highest level ever. The record was set the week before.

The economy for the working class remains catastrophic. Of the 110 million in the U.S. living in rental households, [20 percent are at risk of eviction](#) by Sept. 30, according to the COVID-19 Eviction Defense Project, a Colorado-based community group. Black and Latinx renters are expected to be hardest hit.

The number of U.S. families struggling to put food on the table has seen a “substantial” increase since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the Federal Reserve of St. Louis said in a new analysis of Census Bureau data. [More than 10 percent](#) of households said they sometimes or often didn’t have enough to eat in early June, the St. Louis Fed found.

Food insecurity — defined as the inability to afford healthy food for all family members — affected 37 million U.S. households even before the start of the coronavirus pandemic. That’s due in part to widening income inequality, the report adds.

Payments have been [skipped on more than 106 million](#) student loans, auto loans and other forms of debt since the coronavirus hit the U.S., another sign of the destructiveness of the capitalist economic crisis.

The economic crisis

The global economy was already approaching a recession when the pandemic hit.

Then, with the world economy already on the brink of recession, the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic hit with government-ordered shutdowns of many businesses and stay-at-home orders.

The U.S. economy is now gripped by the dual crisis caused partially by the pandemic and the measures necessary to slow it down and partially by an overproduction crisis that was already unfolding.

However, Trump and the GOP are now claiming that there was nothing wrong with the U.S. economy before the pandemic hit. Instead, they are blaming both the pandemic and the economic crisis on China, and even the Chinese Communist Party.

It is not only Trump and the Republicans who are blaming China. Joseph Biden's Democratic presidential campaign also blames the economic crisis entirely on COVID-19. Biden holds that while Trump's reaction to the pandemic was incompetent, the real villain is China.

The Democrats and Republicans appear to be united on making China the scapegoat. Of course, a capitalist economic crisis is rooted in capitalism itself and the "blame China" campaign is meant to obscure that fact. Capitalist crises can only be completely terminated by overturning the capitalist system, replacing it with socialism.

The 'back to work' campaign

The ruling class is now attempting to rapidly resume production and send workers back to work.

There is no scientific basis for a return to work from the standpoint of public health. Workers are to be sent back to work with absolutely no protections in place to ensure their safety. In fact, the states that have "opened up" have seen a surge in

COVID-19 infections and deaths.

The return to work is about “getting the economy moving again.” That is an altogether different concept than getting everybody jobs and a paycheck safely.

The capitalist system can’t run without workers. The workers are the one indispensable element in capitalist production. But everyone having a job is another matter.

What is a capitalist recession? Capitalist economists use unemployment numbers as the real measure of a recession. Put simply, a recession is when there is a significant rise in unemployment — layoffs, cutbacks, reduced hours, cuts in pay.

And in every previous capitalist recession, all the unemployed workers are never hired back. Some are always left behind. “Opening up,” as Trump is doing, won’t guarantee jobs for all. In fact, “opening up” appears to have increased the layoffs and bankruptcies, as both have been rising since the July 1 reopenings began.

When they say they want to “get the economy moving again,” they mean the profit system. Capitalist profits come from the labor of the working class. The capitalist system of exploitation begins with the unpaid labor of the worker. The capitalists want workers back on the job, producing profits for the capitalists.

Workers get in wages and benefits only a fraction of the value they create during the workday. In effect, they work for themselves for part of the day in return for wages (paid labor) and for the capitalist the rest of the day free of charge (unpaid labor).

Real profit comes from the sweat and blood of the working class. Without that, the capitalist system cannot maintain itself.

The fact that the capitalist stock market is rising is not evidence that the capitalist economy itself is rising. On the contrary, the stock market may be rising because

there has been a severe restructuring of the capitalist economy, throwing out millions of workers. The market is anticipating fabulous profits from the restructuring of the capitalist economy.

Today, the tools of science are being used to fight the coronavirus pandemic. China, Cuba and Vietnam have all used science to stop the spread of the virus and restore economic activity. Science and a socialist base made that possible.

China's economy is growing again — 3.2 percent in the April-to-June period. It also means that China averted recession, [CNN Business reports](#).

China has no mass layoffs, no mass unemployment, no evictions, no food insecurity.

There is scarcely any question that doesn't lend itself to a scientific solution. So why isn't there even one bourgeois economist who will say, "Let us solve the capitalist economic crisis scientifically and eliminate the crisis"?

It's because the capitalist crisis can only be eliminated by abolishing the profit system itself and laying the foundation for a socialist society. To ask the capitalists to solve the capitalist crisis is asking them to sign their own death warrant.

Only the working class can solve the capitalist economic crisis, and then only by taking the wealth of society, the basic means of production, into their own hands and establishing a true workers' socialist society.



Coronavirus surges in U.S.: Capitalism is the crisis

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July 1 — As a consequence of bosses' rush to "reopen the economy" for profit amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic — and the unwillingness or inability of bought-and-paid-for political "leaders" to stand up to their demands — infections and hospitalizations are surging throughout much of the United States. During late June, the rate of confirmed infections reached new highs every single day. [The U.S. death toll](#) now tops 127,000.

The surge of infections has especially engulfed states in the South and West, like Texas and Florida, whose leaders, following the lead of President Donald Trump, largely ignored measures to slow the virus's spread and then quickly dropped any pretense of protecting public health as pressure to "reopen" grew from Wall Street

right on down to the small capitalist on the corner.

California is another epicenter of the virus surge. That state had earlier taken relatively strong measures, but like other Democratic-governed states, caved in to capitalist pressure and began dropping public health measures at the end of May. Now, other states like New York, which had slowed the spread but is now barreling ahead with reopening amid the surge in the rest of the country, could soon face a new spike.

Appearing before Congress on June 30, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director, [Dr. Anthony Fauci, stated](#) that he would not be surprised if the surging rate of infections in the U.S. reached 100,000 per day. Currently, it is around 40,000. Experts say that the rise is not primarily a result of increased testing — which is still wholly inadequate in much of the country. In fact, Trump bragged at his poorly attended campaign rally in Tulsa, Okla., on June 20, that he had ordered that testing be slowed down.

Demand for testing is growing in the most affected states and far outstrips supply, even months into the pandemic. On July 1, the [Washington Post reported](#) “unprecedented demand for testing with lines stretching miles in the summer heat, supplies running out and medical workers left exhausted” in cities like Phoenix, Ariz., and Austin, Texas.

The rest of the world is watching, dumbfounded, at the utter criminality and ineptitude of the U.S. ruling class and its officials. On June 30, as the European Union prepared to lift travel restrictions, it announced that people from the U.S. [would not be permitted to visit](#) because of the lack of control over the coronavirus here.

From panic to profit-driven ‘reopening’

There has not been a clear or consistent policy to combat the spread of the virus at the federal, state or local levels — just a hodgepodge of half-measures and no measures.

When it was finally acknowledged in March that the virus was quickly spreading, projections of 100,000 or more deaths sent Washington and Wall Street into a panic. It was too late for areas like New York, Seattle and Los Angeles, where the pandemic was already out of control. But at last some stay-at-home measures were implemented in late March.

But already in early April, the capitalist class — the bosses, bankers and landlords who hold true power over U.S. society — overcame their initial panic and decided that workers must be dragooned back to their jobs for the sake of profits, deadly contagion or no, even as those same bosses laid off millions of others. They were more fearful of the capitalist crisis of overproduction that coincided with the pandemic, and were determined to scrape up whatever profits they could on the backs of the workers.

By the beginning of May, the modest measures to control the virus's spread had already fallen by the wayside in most of the country. Only those early centers of the health crisis — mostly major coastal cities where the victims were largely Black and Brown people and elders — maintained or strengthened public health measures. And by the Memorial Day holiday at the end of the month, those too were being loosened.

The virus spread in meat-processing plants in the Midwest and South, in Amazon warehouses, in newly reopened churches, restaurants and bars. In many places, bosses and politicians alike flouted regulations meant to enforce mask wearing, social distancing and other safety practices, and thus encouraged middle-class white "consumers" to do likewise.

The president — who can hardly be described as anything but a virus himself —

gleefully ignores any state or local public health measures that he encounters, the very picture of a wealthy oligarch who has [a team dedicated to protecting his own health.](#)

What we see now are the perfectly predictable and preventable consequences of a system that prioritizes profits over people's lives.

U.S. capitalism, the wealthiest empire that has ever existed on planet Earth, could have pumped trillions of dollars into finding a vaccine in cooperation with other countries. It could have guaranteed a job, home and income to every single person living in this country for the duration of the health crisis.

But that's not what capitalism is for. It exists to enrich the few at the expense of the many. The system and its political representatives, whether of the Donald Trump or Joe Biden varieties, "conservative" or "liberal," Republican or Democrat, all dance to the tune of the profiteers, the lives and health of the working class be damned.

Protests are urgent public health measures!

Following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, many politicians and media pundits were quick to warn that the countrywide uprisings against killer cops would contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

That didn't happen. In fact, six weeks into the protest movement, with daily actions happening in cities large and small in every part of the country, there is no correlation between the protests and the surge of the virus. Rather, it is all down to the capitalist-driven rush to "reopen the economy."

"In what's considered the first systematic look at the question, a team of economists determined that only one of 13 cities involved in the earliest wave of protests after Memorial Day had an increase that would fit the pattern," the Associated Press reported July 1.

"It was Phoenix, where experts say cases and hospitalizations surged after a decision by Gov. Doug Ducey to end Arizona's stay-at-home order on May 15 and ease restrictions on businesses. Arizona residents who were cooped up for six weeks flooded Phoenix-area bar districts, ignoring social distancing guidelines."

Why is this? For one thing, unlike the white supremacist "reopen" protests at state capitols in April and May, the anti-racist protesters are highly conscious of their social responsibility to wear masks, avoid unnecessary physical contact, use hand sanitizers or gloves, participate in car caravans, and stay home or get tested if feeling under the weather.

Unlike the megachurches, bars and factories that have been among the "superspreaders" in much of the country, the protests against police terror have been held out of doors, where transmission is less likely, especially when people are wearing masks.

Since late May, this writer has attended several protests in Brooklyn and Manhattan. At every demonstration, almost every person has worn a mask. Organizers, street medics and volunteers provided masks, hand sanitizer and other items in case anyone needed them.

The proportion of people wearing masks was higher at these protests than in any other setting I observed in the city — often much higher. This was true even before the recent loosening of stay-at-home measures encouraged more New Yorkers to stop wearing masks altogether.

In fact, what's been most glaring at the protests are those individuals who most often are not wearing masks — the police.

[An open letter](#) signed by more than 1,200 health care workers states: "White supremacy is a lethal public health issue that predates and contributes to COVID-19.

Black people are twice as likely to be killed by police compared to white people, but the effects of racism are far more pervasive. ... Black people are also more likely to develop COVID-19. Black people with COVID-19 are diagnosed later in the disease course and have a higher rate of hospitalization, mechanical ventilation and death. COVID-19 among Black patients is yet another lethal manifestation of white supremacy.

"In addressing demonstrations against white supremacy, our first statement must be one of unwavering support for those who would dismantle, uproot or reform racist institutions. Staying at home, social distancing and public masking are effective at minimizing the spread of COVID-19. To the extent possible, we support the application of these public health best practices during demonstrations that call attention to the pervasive lethal force of white supremacy. However, as public health advocates, we do not condemn these gatherings as risky for COVID-19 transmission. We support them as vital to the national public health and to the threatened health specifically of Black people in the United States."

Protests are not only an urgent public health measure to fight systemic racism. It is clearer every day that to win any kind of effecting measures to combat the surging coronavirus and stop the pandemic from claiming tens or hundreds of thousands of more lives, a rebellion on the scale of the George Floyd protests and beyond, inseparably linked with the struggle against racist terror, is urgently needed.

Capitalism is the crisis. In the battle for public health, protests, uprisings, strikes and socialism will be the solution!



Why we say A JOB IS A RIGHT

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["How bad is unemployment?"](#) headlined the May 8 edition of the New York Times. "Literally off the charts."

[Axios reports](#) as of May 30 that the real unemployment rate was at least 24 percent and likely above 30 percent.

It's not getting better. "Unemployment rate expected to hit highest since Great Depression," [Yahoo Finance reported](#) June 4, as nearly 2 million more workers applied for unemployment benefits.

"Nearly 43 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits during the pandemic," [says CNN](#). That's not counting the many laidoff workers who've been unable to file their claims through overwhelmed state unemployment offices.

The long-brewing crash of the for-profit capitalist economy, sped up by the global COVID-19 pandemic, has left millions of working-class families hanging on by a thread.

Now Donald Trump, Wall Street and governors from both the Democratic and Republican parties are rushing to "reopen" while serious health risks continue. That means emergency measures to protect people from eviction and additional benefits for the unemployed will soon end. Many, if not most, of the jobs lost are not coming back.

"As people across the United States are told to return to work, employees who balk at the health risks say they are being confronted with painful reprisals," [reports the New York Times](#). "Some are losing their jobs if they try to stay home, and thousands more are being reported to the state to have their unemployment benefits cut off."

You need a job to keep a roof over your head, feed yourself and your family, and pay the bills. Everyone needs a job or other source of income to survive.

Having a job is a basic necessity. It's a simple human right.

In fact, the right to a job is a matter of law — and has been for 74 years!

The 1946 Employment Act and the 1978 Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act legally obligate the president and Congress to use all available means to achieve full employment.

Also adopted in 1946, the United Nations Charter on Human Rights declares, "Everyone has the right to work ... and to protection against unemployment," as well as the right to housing, education and health care.

The 1978 Full Employment Act provides for convening a National Employment Conference to discuss enforcement.

Yet no administration — neither Republican nor Democrat — has ever attempted to fulfill these obligations.

It's high time the government was made to enforce these laws.

Gov't power to ban layoffs and create jobs

Even before the usurpation of greater executive powers by George W. Bush after 9/11, the president was fully empowered to end unemployment and create jobs in response to an economic crisis.

The 1978 law allows the government to create "a reservoir of public employment" if private corporations are unable to provide enough jobs.

Every governor, mayor and county executive also has full authority to order an end to layoffs in an economic emergency.

New York state, for example, empowers the governor to take any action necessary to

prevent or stop the suffering of people as a result of “a natural or man-made disaster.”

The same law requires “a joint effort” of public and private spheres to mobilize the resources of business, labor, agriculture and government at every level to prepare for and meet disasters of all kinds.

The boom-and-bust system of capitalism, which always seeks the highest rate of profit with the least number of workers, is the ultimate “human-made” disaster.

First comes the struggle, then comes the law

Worker unrest during the Great Depression of the 1930s, again following World War II, again during the Civil Rights era, and again during the recession of the 1970s forced the capitalist government to put these laws on the books.

The legal precedent goes back to 1937. Labor Secretary Frances Perkins stated then that workers had a property right to their jobs when she defended the right of sit-down strikers to occupy factories.

Perkins, appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was no revolutionary. She was putting into legal terms what the workers had already achieved by seizing the plants, establishing workers’ control and putting capitalist property rights into question.

It will take further struggle — a united campaign of mass action — to turn these words on paper into reality. The point is, there already exists a legal framework to do so.

How to begin

“The right to a job is a property right,” explained socialist leader Sam Marcy in his

1986 book, "High Tech, Low Pay." "The right to seize and occupy the plants [which includes stores, hospitals, schools, etc.] is an accompanying right. Doing it will make it lawful if carried out in earnest and on a mass scale."

What if labor unions, together with immigrant workers' organizations, the movement against racist killer cops, community groups, the anti-war, women's and LGBTQ2S movements, made these demands of 2020 presidential candidates Trump and Joe Biden:

- Issue an executive order halting layoffs and forcing the Fortune 500 companies to rehire;
- Call a special joint session of Congress to deal exclusively with creating a jobs program that will put 10 million people to work right away with union wages and benefits, with special attention to oppressed communities devastated by the coronavirus;
- End the raids against undocumented workers, ban foreclosures and evictions, make quality health care available to everyone and pass a big increase in the minimum wage.

What if we called upon the unemployed and underemployed to come and occupy Washington until the president and Congress meet their demands?

For a start, they can tax the rich, defund the police, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Pentagon to provide jobs and income for all.



U.S. unemployment hits depression levels. Don't blame China

written by Struggle - La Lucha

August 12, 2020



The New York Times headline declared: "U.S. unemployment worst since the Great Depression." (New York Times, May 9, 2020, print edition)

Actually, the Times report understated the unemployment numbers. In a press release, the Bureau of Labor Statistics explained that the official U-3 unemployment rate, which is supposed to measure jobless people actively looking for work, was actually incorrect, as it didn't include many who were newly laid off for obscure technical reasons. Including them, the BLS statement said, would mean the unemployment rate is 19.7 percent, not 14.7 percent.

Two weeks later, more than 40 million workers have applied for unemployment benefits. Well over 27 percent of the workforce is jobless. And that number does not include gig workers or temp workers who are without jobs now. That's a significantly higher unemployment rate than at the depth of the Great Depression, when joblessness hit 24.9 percent in 1933.

As many as 40 percent of the people laid off will not be getting rehired because their employers — restaurants, theaters, small businesses, and big companies like Hertz, JCPenney, Frontier Communications, J. Crew, Lord & Taylor — are going bust.

Before the coronavirus, people receiving unemployment benefits in most states got less than half their weekly paycheck. Now, the federal stimulus package provides \$600 a week. That \$600 weekly check is what you'd earn for a 40-hour week if you were getting paid \$15 an hour. It's more than double the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. The stimulus payments end in July.

The unemployment checks will stop because Trump and most capitalist economists say that the current unemployment crisis is the result of the deliberate shutting down of the economy made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic. They call it "[The Great Repression.](#)"

By decree, the country will be reopened for business and unemployment will be over — that is, benefit checks to the unemployed will be over. In part, it's also a propaganda move to say there's no economic crisis of capitalism.

Covering up capitalist crisis

The politicians and the capitalist economists don't want to acknowledge that there is a cyclical capitalist crisis of overproduction, a recession, maybe a depression.

Steep, long-term unemployment is what defines a depression. In the Great Depression, after employment reached its deepest lows in 1933, full employment did not return until the U.S. had entered World War II in 1941.

Today, Trump and many capitalist economists say this is only COVID-19, there is no underlying economic crisis. Therefore, full employment will return quickly when the pandemic is over, maybe in the next year or two.

So it's not a depression, not even a recession?

The global economy was already approaching a recession when the pandemic hit.

Reports showing the looming recession are hidden in the financial press — never mentioned in the popular media.

Joe Weisenthal, writing in [Bloomberg's Markets newsletter](#) on May 13, says that a recession really began some time in the middle of 2018. Weisenthal said on Twitter: "While the official recession will likely be dated to Q1 of this year, I'm increasingly of the view that the down cycle really began some time in the middle of 2018."

On May 14, financial bloggers Pam Martens and Russ Martens wrote on their "Wall Street on Parade" blog that the evidence suggests the financial crisis [began in August 2019](#).

Whenever the crisis began, clearly the world economy was already in the beginning stage of a recession when the pandemic began. On top of the economic crisis came the government-ordered COVID-19 shutdowns of many businesses and stay-at-home orders. Shipping and travel declined dramatically, causing the demand for oil to plummet.

However, Trump and the capitalist economists are now claiming that there was nothing wrong with the U.S. economy before the pandemic hit. Instead, they are blaming both the pandemic and the economic crisis on China, and even the Chinese Communist Party. If it wasn't for China, Trump now claims, everything would be fine.

It's not only Trump and the Republicans who are blaming China. Joseph Biden's Democratic presidential campaign blames the economic crisis on COVID-19. Biden holds that while Trump's reaction to the pandemic was incompetent, the real villain is China. To have anyone believe this, Trump and Biden rely on a combination of

anti-Chinese racism and old-fashioned anti-communism.

China saved lives

For example, there is the claim that the Chinese government badly botched its response to COVID-19. In reality, the Chinese government's response to the pandemic has been far superior to the response of federal, state and local governments of the U.S., a fact that the anti-China propaganda attempts to obscure.

China's rapid response held back the virus and saved lives.

When a new disease suddenly appears, identifying and containing it is not a simple task, and there are always mistakes. Once it was clear how serious the crisis was, China acted immediately.

With full transparency, China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) on Dec. 31 that there were 27 cases of a mysterious pneumonia-like illness in Wuhan. On Jan. 12, Chinese scientists shared the virus's genome via the internet. It was the fastest this has ever been accomplished. According to a recent timeline published by China to refute the slanders being spread by the U.S., China briefed the U.S. on coronavirus epidemic prevention on Feb. 3 for the 30th time.

The WHO, and other public health agencies and experts, describe China's response as setting new, groundbreaking standards and practices in outbreak detection and response. WHO officials said China's quick response helped contain the spread and saved lives around the world.

The ruling class and its paid politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, are increasingly united on making China the scapegoat.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been unleashed as the U.S. attack dog on China, [reports The Hill](#). The measures being threatened against China can only

aggravate the economic crisis, but may serve to rally support for the president in a war-like situation.

A built-in crisis

The media have completely hidden the boom-and-bust industrial cycle of capitalism.

Capitalism is doomed to periodic crises of overproduction. A crisis of overproduction comes about because of the anarchy of capitalist production. Capitalist crises are a collision between two forces — production and the markets. Capitalists expand production seemingly without limit and are in competition among themselves to do that, but the markets expand only slowly if at all. Production exceeds what can be sold for a profit.

U.S. capitalism was in a crisis of overproduction in 2019 and in the beginning of 2020. This could be seen in the record level of consumer debt. On Feb. 11, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York said consumer borrowing in the U.S. rose to a new record level at \$14.15 trillion. That's mortgages, student loans, auto loans and credit card debt.

Also rising, according to the Fed's report, were credit card delinquencies, that is, nonpayment of credit card debt. That's because, in part, wages for most workers are lower, in real terms, than they were 40 years ago.

At the same time, business sector debt was historically high, the Fed also reported, higher and more unstable than consumer debt. The Fed's response, in fact, was to print more money to bail out Wall Street and the unstable businesses.

The "Great Repression," as they call the COVID-19 economic shutdown, has a very real impact, but it is layered on top of a recession that would have meant mass job loss, either later this year or in 2021, whether or not the pandemic had occurred. This is not to deny that the pandemic will profoundly shape the new recession. The

current economic situation is being shaped by the interaction between the “Great Repression” and an underlying cyclical crisis of overproduction.



Bosses bet on profits over workers' lives

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Fruit processing workers are on strike at 13 plants in Washington state's Yakima Valley. “Hoppers” — sanitation workers who do the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs — are on strike in New Orleans. Retail workers and baristas at Starbucks and other coffee chains are organizing against efforts to force them back to work in dangerous conditions. The Minnesota Nurses Association plans to march on the state capitol in St. Paul on May 20 to protest the continued lack of masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE).

Members of the Oglala Lakota Indigenous nation have set up checkpoints to protect residents from infection since South Dakota's governor refuses to take public health

measures. [Armed Black and Latinx activists](#) escorted a Black woman lawmaker, Sarah Anthony, safely to the Michigan Capitol after threats from gun-toting, pandemic-denying white supremacists. And at several other state capitols, health care workers in masks and scrubs have stood defiantly against similar fascist mobs.

This is a small sample of the heroic, defensive actions by workers and oppressed communities happening in cities, towns and rural areas as the reactionary, unscientific and profoundly dangerous “back to work” pressure grows. All of these struggles deserve whatever solidarity we can give.

Across the U.S., from the highest levels of power on Wall Street and the White House to the franchisee on the corner, bosses made a decisive shift in the first half of May toward forcing the reopening of the economy amidst the still-raging COVID-19 pandemic.

No conspiracy theories are required. This is the logic of capitalist exploitation, built into the system — bosses’ profits come from workers’ labor power; capital must expand or die.

'Not a crime at which it will scruple'

In his book “Capital,” Karl Marx quoted economist T.J. Dunning: “Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. 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.”

It was true in the 1800s, and it’s true now.

In mid-March, panic over looming mass deaths and what that could mean for the

fate of the profit system caused the bosses and their flunkies in Washington and statehouses to institute partial, inadequate shutdown measures. This coincided with the long-impending crisis of capitalist overproduction, resulting in mass layoffs — [now officially at 33 million](#), but believed to be much higher, given the deficiencies of state unemployment agencies.

The halting measures to slow the coronavirus exposed the utter inability of the system to provide even the basics of public health and security for the masses of people.

But once the shock passed and mass rebellion didn't immediately materialize, the illogic of the profit system quickly overrode the logic of protecting the lives of people. Almost immediately the bosses — egged on by Trump — clamored for an end to the safety measures.

Many bosses and state governments never shut down at all, claiming that forcing super exploited service workers to toil without proper PPE for low wages was “essential.” Trump ordered meat processing plants to stay open as COVID-19 ravaged the mostly Black and Brown meatpackers — many of them the same migrants that Trump demonizes and terrorizes with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement gestapo.

Almost every day brings reports of [mass infection outbreaks](#) among food processing workers, like this incident reported by the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) on May 16, where Eastern Virginia “district officials said they were able to test 1,380 people over two days on May 8 and 9. That testing was extended to workers at Perdue Farms in Accomac and Tyson Foods in Temperanceville, which revealed a count of about 510 [infected workers] combined between the two companies. ... Only 85 of the 510 cases have been included in the Virginia Department of Health’s data so far.”

By mid-May, most states had eased or eliminated stay-at-home orders and other measures meant to limit the virus's spread — even in states where the rate of infection is escalating, and as reports grow of a co-morbid toxic shock condition among children who've been exposed to the virus.

"Texas sets record for most coronavirus fatalities in state as reopening gets underway," [Newsweek](#) reported May 15. "Record number of COVID-19 cases reported Saturday in Wisconsin, with 502 infections," said the [Appleton Post-Crescent](#) on May 16, days after the state's Supreme Court struck down the governor's extension of a stay-at-home order. The following day, the [Minneapolis Star-Tribune](#) headlined: "Minnesota logs 699 new COVID-19 cases day before state relaxes stay-home rules. Minnesota to allow more businesses to open Monday."

Celebrity capitalist [Elon Musk defied](#) California's public health measures, ordering workers to report to work at his Tesla auto plant in Alameda County and daring officials to arrest him. They didn't, of course; Tesla was reclassified as "essential" and its workers may now pay the price. [Amazon boss Jeff Bezos](#), on track to become the world's first trillionaire thanks to the boost that the pandemic has given his profits, ordered all warehouse workers to report after May 1 or lose their benefits, and will end \$2 per hour hazard pay at the end of the month.

Rampant racism

New York and California, two epicenters of the pandemic, are moving to reopen. Even prior to the May 15 expiration of the statewide PAUSE order in New York, and long before New York City has met the state's criteria to reopen, many "non-essential" businesses have reopened, without consequences.

At the same time, the New York Police Department's enforcement of social distancing guidelines has been used almost exclusively against Black and Brown communities, including a Black mother and child who were [attacked by cops in the](#)

[subway](#) for allegedly wearing their face masks “improperly.”

Despite posturing as the responsible alternative to Trump, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo [effectively ended the state eviction ban](#) while claiming to extend it through August. Cuomo refused to even consider a rent freeze, leaving people who lost jobs and income on the hook for months of exorbitant rent.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, meanwhile, prohibited protests, siccing the cops on a social-distancing observant press conference by the [Reclaim Pride Coalition](#), which opposed the city’s cosy relationship with anti-LGBTQ2S “charity” Samaritan’s Purse. Both officials have ganged up on the homeless, driving people out of the subways while refusing to open up the city’s multitude of empty apartments and hotel rooms to those in need of shelter.

The wealthiest capitalist country on earth could easily provide an income for the entire population, including health care, housing and food, for the duration of the pandemic crisis. It could ensure measures are implemented to protect front-line workers and for a safe return to work by everyone afterward, as China and other countries are doing. All it would require is a fraction of the money lavished on the Pentagon war machine and bailouts for Big Banks, Big Oil and Big Business generally.

Instead, COVID-19 is being allowed to run rampant, causing veritable genocide [on Navajo land](#). Black and Brown communities across the country, with the least access to health care and the most workers on the front lines, are being devastated, while people continue to be killed and brutalized by police and other white supremacists. The tide of racist attacks on Asian people is unstemmed as both Trump and presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden ramp up the war-mongering campaign against China.

Vast numbers of infections and deaths are still projected by federal agencies, as

revealed in a report by the [New York Times on May 4](#), still on the scale that first caused the capitalist establishment to panic two months ago. Now the numbers may get worse due to the premature reopening, especially among the most vulnerable sections of the working class: seniors, the disabled, those with pre-existing health conditions, and communities plagued by poverty and racist discrimination.

Trump and Senate leaders have dismissed the warnings of their own health experts, including the congressional testimony of [Dr. Anthony Fauci](#) and [whistleblower Rick Bright](#), warning of a resurgence of the virus and the urgent need to prepare for a second wave of the pandemic, which could come as early as autumn.

A question of power

Make no mistake: The bosses are willing to sacrifice as many workers as it takes for them to keep turning a profit. Is it too late to turn the situation around?

It's a question of power. Which class has it?

Right now the capitalists, the boss class, feel themselves firmly in the saddle. The bosses will only take the safety of the workers and oppressed into account when they feel that their rule, and their profit-driven system, is threatened or could be challenged.

What's needed is a countervailing movement that challenges the bosses' ability to resume "business as usual" for fear of losing it all.

For that to happen, the workers — the class that makes the economy run, whose labor produces profits — have to expand their struggle. And the most conscious elements of the working class need to fight for a perspective that goes beyond defensive battles — to fight for socialism.

A political struggle is needed to complement and elevate the many heroic local and

industrywide battles being waged piecemeal across the country. Demands must be made on the federal government and the capitalist system as a whole, not just individual companies or localities. A return to “business as usual” will mean an end to unemployment compensation, rent freezes and other survival measures for the millions left jobless by the capitalist crisis.

Fight for guaranteed income, health care, housing and food for all — for as long as it takes to defeat the pandemic! Free, accessible vaccinations for all once a vaccine is available! End war and sanctions against other countries! Cooperate in the global fight against COVID-19!

Empty the prisons and detention camps! Community control of the police and pandemic emergency measures! Enforcement of social distancing and face coverings should be based on education and community engagement, not repression — and should not be thrown on the backs of low-paid retail workers [who now face violent attacks](#) for trying to enforce safety measures.

We can raise the demand for expropriation and workers' control of businesses that do not take necessary safety measures. If the bosses complain they can't afford it — then they should not be in business. The workers should take over the factories, stores, restaurants, delivery services and hospitals, and run them themselves. The bosses' bottom line must not be an excuse for profit-driven murder!



Don't starve, fight!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

August 12, 2020

Ninety years ago, on March 6, 1930, over a million people demonstrated across the United States for unemployment relief. The Great Depression had broken out a few months before, punctuated by the stock market crash of October 1929.

By the time 110,000 people gathered in New York City's Union Square to demand help, [the number of jobless had almost tripled. By 1933,](#) 13 million people were unemployed, a quarter of the workforce.

Those were “the good old days” before unemployment insurance and SNAP benefits (food stamps) were won. If you didn’t have family members able to help, you faced homelessness and hunger. [New York City hospitals reported 94 deaths](#) from starvation in 1931.

The Communist International called for an [International Unemployed Day on March 6, 1930.](#) In the United States, the Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League organized protests.

“Don’t starve, fight!” was the famous slogan used. A leading demand was “work or wages.”

“Last hired, first fired” is still the rule for Black workers in the U.S. It was worse 90 years ago. [By 1934](#), 60 percent of African American men were jobless in Detroit.

Black and white organizers in the Communist Party made special outreach efforts to African Americans. Black, white and Latinx workers rallied together on March 6, 1930.

In Detroit’s Cadillac Square, 100,000 people gathered. Fifteen thousand people turned out in Flint, Mich., despite the police arresting the organizers before the demonstration.

Chicago’s police chief claimed that communists were threatening “bombings and assassinations.” That didn’t stop [50,000 workers from marching in the Windy City](#). Thirty thousand came out in Milwaukee.

Fifty thousand marched in Pittsburgh, while 30,000 assembled in Philadelphia. In Ohio, 30,000 turned out in Cleveland and 15,000 in Canton. Large demonstrations were also organized in Baltimore, San Francisco and Los Angeles. (Daily Worker, March 7, 1930)

Firefighters sprayed workers in Washington, D.C., with cold water as they approached the White House. New York City Mayor Jimmy Walker mobilized the entire police force to prevent people from marching to City Hall.

Walker’s cops viciously beat workers with their clubs. Communist Party leaders William Z. Foster, Robert Minor and Israel Amter were arrested and sentenced to six months in jail for participating in an “illegal” demonstration.

Struggle wins some justice

A widespread myth is that President Franklin Roosevelt gave the people Social Security, unemployment benefits and the right to organize unions. None of these concessions were given. People had to fight for them.

Unemployed councils led by the Communist Party fought evictions and demanded jobs. During one struggle to keep a family in their home, Chicago police killed the Black activists Abe Gray, John O'Neil and Frank Armstrong on Aug. 3, 1931.

Thirty thousand people marched to protest this atrocity. Chicago Mayor Cermak was forced to halt all evictions. Everybody knew that it was the "reds" who won this moratorium.

A working-class upsurge began that organized millions of workers into unions. A 44-day sitdown strike shut down General Motors — then the world's largest corporation — and won a union contract.

United States Steel agreed to sign a union contract, too. But not all struggles were victorious, at least at first. The strike against "Little Steel" — the smaller rivals of U.S. Steel — was drowned in blood.

Chicago's Democratic Mayor Ed Kelly had his cops kill 10 striking steelworkers on Memorial Day in 1937. President Roosevelt's cynical answer was to quote Shakespeare: "A plague on both your houses," meaning that both the labor movement and big business were responsible for this bloodshed.

But how could any unions be organized at all when a fifth of the working class was jobless? The 19th century railroad tycoon Jay Gould bragged that he could hire one-half of the working class to shoot the other half. Some workers would be so desperate that they would cross picket lines just to eat.

But the 1930s were different. All the anti-eviction struggles and hunger marches helped organize unions, too. So did the demonstrations to save the lives of the

Scottsboro defendants — nine young Black men in Alabama falsely accused of rape — and to protest Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.

Thousands of protests forced Roosevelt to establish the Works Progress Administration, which hired millions of jobless workers.

Millions of the unemployed knew that the strikers at General Motors were fighting for them.

That's the spirit that today's labor movement needs to copy. The capitalist class wants to privatize both Social Security and the U.S. Postal Service. They want to get rid of everything that poor people won in the 1930s and 1960s.

Stopping the billionaire class from turning back the clock goes hand-in-hand with organizing workers at Amazon and Walmart. So does denouncing police brutality, defending immigrants and supporting Indigenous struggles. Don't starve, fight!

