

Let's ask, why so woefully unprepared for this economic disaster?

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Editor of the Reformer,

As we pass another International Workers Day we find ourselves in yet another economic crisis. Ostensibly this crisis is different; spawned by an unseen biological agent rather than the standard dose of late-stage capitalist destruction. But one could argue that workers are now being victimized by both. As the virus spreads and the economy implodes, we are left with \$1,200 (if you fit the proper categories – not homeless, not married to a migrant, etc.), military flyovers and a few extra weeks of unemployment insurance, while corporations rake in billions of government aid. This playbook, of course, is always the same. We must save the corporations in order to save us all.

But, these dual viruses (economic and biological) are, in some way, illuminating. For they work to reveal, in real time, the bankruptcy of our current regime. Within weeks, more than 30 million people have been made unemployed with little fall back save the few scraps thrown out by the government. Millions more are losing their private "health care." The virus is ravaging the very people who are the key victims of the economic virus: African-Americans, Native Americans, people without homes, people living in poverty. State budgets are in free fall and this is followed by the predictable calls for tightening our belts and slashing publicly funded social and educational programs. [This is already happening in Vermont with calls to largely shutter the state college system – which serves lower income students – and layoffs in the WNESU school district.] Food is being plowed back into the fields or dumped because there is no profit to be made, while people line up for miles at food banks. Low wage workers are forced to perform dangerous jobs with little support – other than platitudes about heroism – and limited access to protective equipment.

The oligarchs and their servants in government will never answer basic questions. Why is there no money for the crisis? How has such a "robust" economy fallen to ruin so quickly? Who made all of the profit from the labor of the workers? Why did we have massive levels of wealth inequality, underfunded public education, a burgeoning environmental crisis, a disastrous private health care system and broken infrastructure before the biological virus even began?

Let us ask these questions and many more. Questions like these can be useful because they help us re-imagine and act upon the creation of a different world. A world where workers are not tools to be exploited for profit, where public schools are not funded by tourist dollars, where our collective health and well-being is at the center of our economic system, not the periphery.

Henry Zacchini

Brattleboro, May 5

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