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Capitalism is Dying, But Don't Expect the Patient to Accept the Diagnosis

“Capitalism, Marx said, never went beyond those economic models where a few dominate a majority. Capitalism just replaced the dichotomies of master/slave and lord/serf with a new one. A dominating and exploiting minority was still there, but it had a new name: employers.”

— Richard D. Wolff, Understanding Marxism

Perhaps you've noticed something. There have been massive staffing shortages throughout the US and elsewhere. Workers are walking out or just not showing up. Little analysis has been given to this phenomenon outside of left circles, but some have dubbed it “Striketober.” How ever it is termed, this is what late capitalism looks like as it dies.

How long did we think this would go on for? Millions of lives full of monotony, drudgery and economic lack and hardship, while billionaires jaunt off to the upper atmosphere in penis shaped rockets to the cheers of most mainstream media. But along with what we are witnessing there is a disconnect.

I have written a lot about how wealthy liberals in the US have affixed blinders to their political senses before and since the last election cycle. Biden won, that is all. But his political agency has been stymied at every turn, often by members of his own party. And few liberals seem to be aware that Trump is rising meteorically in popularity among the 74+ million Americans who voted for him last time. 74+ million votes, and there are only 133 million Americans eligible to vote. He has the Republican arm of the ruling duopoly in his tight grip. How many Republican lawmakers have seen their popularity and influence suffer gravely for simply condemning the January 6th coup attempt

We can hope that the increasing frustration of workers will result in a revolution of sorts. A “times up” moment for capitalism. But this would be at the expense of understanding how labor movements have been crushed in the West. The States has one of the bloodiest records when it comes to suppression of workers. Yes, there have been many gains. But how many Americans are aware of the massacres carried out by government forces and militias? How many understand the lyrics of Woody Guthrie songs, or have ever even heard of the music legend? This imposed ignorance is by design. Civil rights can be celebrated. Labor rights? Not so much.

The American Empire is the seat of capitalist power in the world today, and its militaristic viciousness is unmatched when it comes to protecting the “interests” of that power. A 20-year long war against Afghanistan and the ruins of Iraq attest to this. But mass graves in South and Central America also demonstrate the empire’s unbridled brutality against anyone who dares oppose its economic and political hegemony. In short, we know what the American ruling class is capable of. And we would be foolish to think they would not use everything in their arsenal to protect their enormous coffers as things become more desperate.

And thus comes the specter of fascism. With a labor force increasingly atomized and pushed to the brink, and a Democratic Party unable and unwilling to address the very dire material conditions decimating vast swaths of the population, it is a threat that we ignore at our peril. Trump and those around him may not understand the term fascism, but they understand the alienation and angst among much of the population. They understand the power of nationalism, scapegoating and twisting facts. And when push comes to shove, so do corporations. Too many have been bamboozled into thinking they have evolved or are progressive-minded. Similar to agencies like the CIA or the military sector, their woke window dressing has been an effective one, focusing on the politics of identity rather than the vast inequities and injustices that their very existence perpetuate. Corporations are about profit, and they profit most when they are married to the institutions and power of the state. Without a doubt, the trajectory of capitalism, if not thwarted, is total fascism.

Attorney Steven Donziger is a current example of this. He won against Chevron-Texaco. Against Big Oil for creating a toxic sludge wasteland in the pristine Amazon rainforest killing countless Indigenous people and species, some of which we have never even seen before, and refusing to take any responsibility for it. Yet it was he who was punished. First jailed in his home, now in prison, on charges of contempt of a contemptable system. Next to the persecution of Julian Assange, the conviction of Steven Donziger counts as one of

the most flagrant examples of the corruption of the US judicial system. It proves, without any pretense of illusion, that the judiciary is merely a handmaiden to corporations.

The stirring among American workers, and scores of others around the world, is encouraging. This is the result of decades of neoliberal policies that denuded the commons and replaced them with nothing but austerity, deregulation and privatization. And the stakes have never been higher. The current arrangement of economic and political power is a cult of death, for us and for the biosphere on which we all depend. It is a system of codified cruelty that benefits an ever-shrinking class of the super rich who become more and more detached from humanity and the needs of our besieged planet by the day.

There is no reformation that will alter the character of this arrangement. Our only hope lies in euthanizing the beast before it does even more damage. In uniting workers around the world and across all sectors of society in common cause. Because as capitalism dies it will not go down gracefully. It will lash out violently at anything in its path as it flails. And we should not expect any of its most ardent adherents to abandon the faith either. Indeed, most of them haven't even realized that its prognosis is a terminal one.

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