

The Trump administration vs. science

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President Trump's public criticism of his own top coronavirus expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, is part of a broader policy of denying science and appealing to the most backward and reactionary social elements in America. The White House is seeking to whip up a fascistic movement to bolster the demands of big business to "reopen" the US economy, regardless of the cost in the health and lives of working people.

Fauci's cautiously worded remarks to a Senate committee hearing Tuesday expressed the consensus of epidemiologists and other public health experts. He warned that state governments that have largely abandoned restrictions on business operations over the past three weeks are paving the way to a disastrous resurgence of COVID-19 and "needless suffering and death."

At the hearing, Fauci made clear that the pandemic is not "under control," that the real number of people who have died from COVID-19 is greater than the official tally of 80,000, that the effectiveness of the Remdesivir antiviral treatment is "modest," and that recovering from COVID-19 does not guarantee immunity.

This hearing was followed yesterday by the devastating testimony before a House committee of public health official Rick Bright, who documented his repeated and failed efforts to warn the administration of the coming COVID-19 pandemic and to secure an adequate supply of tests, protective equipment and therapeutics. Bright made clear that the administration's decisions lead to countless deaths.

Rather than heeding his warnings, US health officials, acting in keeping with Trump's efforts to downplay the pandemic, fired him from his position as head of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday as he met with two governors—one a Democrat, the other a Republican—who have dropped most coronavirus-

related restrictions, Trump declared that Fauci's criticism of state reopenings was "not an acceptable answer."

"Look, he wants to play all sides of the equation," Trump said, singling out Fauci's statement that no vaccine or other medical treatment for COVID-19 would be ready by August, when schools and colleges would normally resume. "I don't consider our country coming back if the schools are closed," Trump said.

Trump dismissed the reports of a new and deadly syndrome affecting children who have survived COVID-19, saying, "Now when you have an incident, one out of a million, one out of 500,000, will something happen? Perhaps... but you can be driving to school and some bad things can happen, too." He went on to repeat disproven claims that the danger of COVID-19 was limited to the elderly and those with preexisting health problems.

Trump condemned Bright on Thursday, calling him "disgruntled," while Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar falsely claimed everything Bright called for had been carried out.

The US president continued his attack Thursday morning, telling Fox Business Network that he "totally" disagrees with Fauci over his reservations about reopening school systems. He went on to tell his interviewer, the Wall Street cheerleader Maria Bartiromo, "We have to get our country open... as quickly as possible. We can't keep going on like this."

Dr. Fauci has become a target of ultra-right attack for several months, with the #firefauci hashtag trending on right-wing social media. Pundits on Breitbart.com, Fox News and other such media outlets have denounced him as a political opponent of Trump, since he has declined to support Trump's endorsement of quack remedies for coronavirus and has admitted that a faster US government response to the pandemic would have saved lives.

In an appearance Thursday at a Pennsylvania company that distributes medical supplies, Trump embraced a policy of deliberately suppressing information about the pandemic. “When you test, you have a case,” he said. “When you test, you find something is wrong with people. If we didn’t do any testing we would have very few cases.” He later added, “Could be that testing’s, frankly, overrated. Maybe it is overrated.” On the day of Trump’s visit to Pennsylvania’s Lehigh Valley—where he again ostentatiously refused to wear a mask—the coronavirus death toll in nearby Philadelphia passed 1,000.

While attacking science and medical knowledge, Trump endorsed protests in Pennsylvania and Michigan against coronavirus lockdowns, and hailed Wednesday’s court decision in Wisconsin overturning that state’s lockdown order.

Trump is making an appeal to the most backward and confused right-wing elements, including Christian fundamentalists, militia groups and anti-vaxxers. These groups have little popular support—Thursday’s demonstration in Lansing, Michigan, for example, brought out only 200 people—but they are given vast publicity by the corporate media and presented as the expression of mass hostility to an approach to the pandemic which gives priority to public health.

Media coverage of the Wisconsin court decision, for example, focused on the reopening of bars and restaurants and their happy customers, while ignoring the fact that the vast majority of the state’s population supports the lockdown and has been observing it conscientiously. The coronavirus toll in Wisconsin now stands at nearly 11,000 cases and 421 deaths.

The consequences of these actions will be deadly. While the initial outbreaks of COVID-19 in the United States were concentrated in urban areas, four of the ten counties with the highest death rates from the disease are now in the rural south, including three counties in Georgia and St. John the Baptist Parish in Louisiana.

In the increasingly ferocious attack on science and medical experts, the Trump administration speaks for the financial oligarchy. While Trump has been the most vocal and consistent advocate of a premature return to work, this policy is being carried out by both Democratic and Republican governors.

If the principles of mathematics contravened class interests, Lenin once noted, they would encounter bitter

opposition. Here it is not a question of the foundations of mathematics, but of the most basic scientific and public health measures necessary to combat the coronavirus pandemic and save countless thousands of lives.

The billionaires and their political representatives, both Democratic and Republican, having received their massive financial bailout from Congress and the Federal Reserve, care nothing for the fate of the workers whom they are now seeking to force back to work in order to resume the extraction of surplus value from their labor.

This campaign will involve not merely the threat of cutting off unemployment compensation and other benefits. That may well be sufficient to compel millions of workers to report back to their workplaces, but it will not be enough to keep them there as the toll of infection and death resumes its upward climb.

The brandishing of automatic weapons in the state Capitol in Lansing, Michigan and at other anti-lockdown protests is a warning of what is being prepared for workers who oppose the return to work and who resist working under unsafe, even deadly conditions.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes the return-to-work campaign being waged by big business and its political representatives in both parties. All those implicated in this effort, from President Trump to his Democratic “opponent” Joe Biden, to the Democrats and Republicans in Congress who voted unanimously for the corporate bailout, to the governors of both parties now relaxing or rescinding lockdowns, will have the blood of tens of thousands on their hands, if not far more.



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