

Academic promoted by *Jacobin* to campaign for reopening schools meets with Trump officials

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In late September, *Jacobin* magazine, which is affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), published an article promoting the reopening of schools and the removal of other restrictions aimed at combatting the spread of the coronavirus.

The article took the form of an interview with two epidemiologists who advocate for the US to follow the so-called “Swedish model” of encouraging large sections of the population to become infected with COVID-19.

On Tuesday, the main individual interviewed by *Jacobin* in the article, Harvard university professor Martin Kulldorff, met with the Trump administration officials responsible for formulating White House policy in relation to the pandemic.

Kulldorff, along with Oxford professor Sunetra Gupta and Stanford professor Jay Bhattacharya, held discussions with Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Scott Atlas. Atlas is a new member of the White House coronavirus task force and an unabashed proponent of removing all restraints on the spread of the virus.

In the meeting, the guest doctors reportedly lent their approval to the policy being pursued by the White House. They advised Azar and Atlas to allow the virus to spread uncontrolled among young, healthy people.

Kulldorff said after the meeting, according to the *Hill*, “We had a very good discussion. He [Atlas] asked many questions, and we put forth our case to protect the people who are vulnerable, and the idea of trying to do lockdowns to eliminate this disease is not realistic.”

Atlas told the *Hill* in an email that he supported the position of Kulldorff and the others involved in the meeting. “Their targeted protection of the vulnerable and opening schools and society policy matches the policy of the President and what I have advised.”

That is, the policy promoted by *Jacobin* magazine

matches the policy of the Trump administration.

Atlas also said he supported the recent “Great Barrington Declaration” written by Kulldorff, Bhattacharya and Gupta. The summation of the “declaration” states that “those who are not vulnerable should immediately be allowed to resume life as normal.”

The basic conclusion of the “declaration” amounts to this: Millions of workers’ lives are to be sacrificed in the name of profit. No effort or resources will be allocated to contain the disease or mitigate its impact.

The policy promoted by Kulldorff, Atlas and *Jacobin* is premised on the claim that the virus does not affect young people and the healthy, which is false. Just a week ago, a nineteen-year-old teenager at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, otherwise in full health, died from neurological complications.

Moreover, the unrestrained spread of the virus among young and middle-aged people will also inevitably lead to the spread of the virus among the elderly, as indeed happened in Sweden.

Already more than 210,000 people have died from the virus in the United States, and more than one million internationally.

Kulldorff has doubled down on his positions in recent days on Twitter. On October 2, he tweeted a section of his interview with Reaction.life: “We don’t close schools because of the annual flu. We don’t ban people from driving cars because there are people who die in car accidents. We let people live normal lives with standard precautions.”

Quoting from an article published in the UK’s *Spectator*, he tweeted on August 17th: “We should appreciate young adults who help generate herd immunity by living normal lives and keeping society afloat. When people throw misguided complaints at you, falsely

claiming that you are endangering others, remember that the opposite is true.”

Kulldorff is essentially encouraging young people to go out and get infected, which is entirely in line with Trump’s policy of “let it rip.”

The coming together of *Jacobin* magazine with the right-wing policies of Trump is notable but not entirely surprising. *Jacobin*, along with its co-thinkers in the DSA, functions as a faction of the Democratic Party.

Jacobin is preparing the way for the possibility of a future Biden administration. If Biden becomes president, the editorial board at *Jacobin* knows full well that nothing fundamental will change about American politics or the ruling class response to the pandemic. Its role is to prepare the way for Biden to embrace the policy of herd immunity by attempting to give it a left veneer.

For all the claims of major differences with the Republicans on social policy, the Democrats and their lead representative, presidential nominee Joe Biden, have made it clear that they support the policy of herd immunity. Biden has done everything in his power to facilitate the reopening of schools and workplaces.

The original article promoting the policy of herd immunity caused consternation among the readers and staff of *Jacobin*. No doubt some members of the editorial board felt it was perhaps a step too far and would damage whatever credibility they still have with youth and workers who are horrified at the prospect of millions more needless deaths.

However, as the WSWS wrote in its original analysis of the *Jacobin* article: “Words have meaning. By embracing and openly advocating the policies of the Trump administration, the publishers of *Jacobin* have made themselves complicit in the administration’s crimes. The millions of working people whose friends and loved ones died needlessly will not forget the words and actions of *Jacobin*.”



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