

Trump's "herd immunity" policy and right-wing terror

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On Tuesday, *Newsweek* reported that two Trump administration officials said the White House supports the Great Barrington Declaration, a statement advocating the mass infection of the population with COVID-19 through a policy of "herd immunity."

The declaration comes out of a meeting organized by the American Institute for Economic Research (AIER), a right-wing libertarian think tank centered in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. It calls for governments to "build up immunity to the virus through natural infection," discourages remote work, and promotes mass gatherings where the virus can spread. The implementation of this policy would mean death on a massive scale.

The "herd immunity" policy is condemned by all reputable health authorities, including the World Health Organization. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Monday called such a policy "unethical." He added, "Herd immunity is achieved by protecting people from a virus, not by exposing them to it. Never in the history of public health has herd immunity been used as a strategy for responding to an outbreak, let alone a pandemic."

But this is precisely the policy that has been implemented by the Trump administration and other governments throughout the world.

The *Washington Post* quoted a White House official as saying, "The plan [the Great Barrington Declaration] is endorsing what the president's policy has been for months."

If the White House believed "for months" that efforts to contain the pandemic are counterproductive, then its refusal to take basic measures to stop the spread of the pandemic in January and February must be seen as malicious homicide. Based on the belief that mass infection of the population is a good thing, the White

House deliberately and knowingly carried out policies that have led to over 200,000 deaths in the US.

The anonymous official continued, "Everybody knows that 200,000 people died. That's extremely serious and tragic. But on the other hand, I don't think society has to be paralyzed, and we know the harms of confining people to their homes."

The Trump administration is also escalating its attack on Dr. Anthony Fauci as part of the broader effort to undermine any coordinated response to the pandemic. Fauci recently warned "If we don't do what we need to in the fall and winter, we could have 300,000-400,000 Covid-19 deaths."

The homicidal policy of the ruling class in response to the pandemic is at the center of the unprecedented political crisis in the United States. To implement this policy, the ruling elite is resorting to ever more violent and dictatorial forms of rule.

The White House's open endorsement of "herd immunity" comes just days after law enforcement officials revealed an advanced plot by far-right terrorists to kidnap and kill Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. The plot, which according to reports yesterday also targeted Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, was centered on opposition to even the most minimal restrictions aimed at containing the pandemic.

The plot grew out of right-wing demonstrations in April and May, led by heavily armed militias, in state capitals in Michigan, Virginia, Wisconsin and other states. These demonstrations, egged on by the Trump's call to "liberate" these states, came as the ruling class was demanding a return to work following limited measures adopted in March in response to protests by autoworkers and other sections of the working class as the pandemic spread.

In late March, Congress passed, on a near unanimous basis, the CARES Act, which sanctioned the transfer of trillions of dollars to Wall Street and Corporate America. Having secured its interests, the ruling class immediately demanded an end to any measures that undermined the flow of profits to pay for the bailout of the rich.

While spearheaded by Trump, this policy is bipartisan. It was first announced by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who proclaimed that “the cure can’t be worse than the disease,” that is, that the measures aimed at containing the pandemic were not worth the cost. States throughout the country, under both Democrats and Republicans, began removing restrictions on businesses and sending workers back on the job. The media played its role by presenting the small right-wing demonstrations as a legitimate expression of popular sentiment.

The consequences were predictable: a renewed expansion of the virus and a surge in deaths. However, the ruling class is opposed to new measures to contain the spread. At the same time, the economic impact of the virus has produced a massive social catastrophe for tens of millions of people, who are being cut off from unemployment benefits and face poverty, eviction and hunger.

Trump is reacting to these developments by escalating his conspiracies. With the election only three weeks away, Trump is stoking far-right violence and threatening to remain in power whatever the results of the election. He is counting on the appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, following nomination hearings this week, to sanction this coup.

The response of the ruling class to the pandemic also explains the role of the Democratic Party in attempting to cover up and downplay the coup plot in Michigan and the connections to the policy of the Trump administration. Biden and other leading Democrats have remained silent on the significance of the efforts to overthrow state governments.

The Democrats, members of a party of Wall Street and the military, are terrified of anything that might stoke broader popular opposition to the Trump administration. A mobilization of the population against the fascistic plotting centered in the White House would require an exposure of the social interests that are driving it—including the implementation of the

policy of “herd immunity” that the entire ruling class promotes.

Whatever happens in the election, the events of this year cannot be undone. The policy of the ruling class is fundamentally incompatible with the preservation of democratic forms of government. In defense of its profit interests, the ruling class has employed far-right terror whose ultimate target is working class opposition.

The fight against dictatorship must be connected to the political mobilization of the working class against the homicidal back-to-work campaign, mass unemployment and historically unprecedented levels of social inequality. It is of necessity a fight against the ruling class and the entire capitalist system.



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