

The dirty secret of America under Trump: 1 in 5 children goes hungry

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Earlier this month, US President Trump boasted in an interview with Fox News that, under his leadership, America had the “best economy we’ve ever had.” Any worker watching the interview would have wondered what America the president was talking about.

But Trump quickly explained what he meant. “We have the best stock market we’ve ever had.” And that is true. The stock market, and the wealth of the financial elite that owns most financial assets, keeps hitting records. The NASDAQ has surged 27 percent in a single month. Oracle CEO Larry Ellison made \$100 billion in a single day. NVIDIA, whose chips power the AI boom driving layoffs throughout the country, has seen its stock price increase by 50 percent, mirroring the dizzying heights of the dot-com boom a quarter-century ago.

Trump never ceases to boast about the fortunes created for the financial oligarchy. Left unsaid is that these fortunes are predicated on the impoverishment and ever greater exploitation of the workers of the United States and the world.

In an indication of what the ruling class is planning and its implications, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Saturday announced the “termination of future Household Food Security Reports,” which have been released every year for 30 years to document the state of hunger in the country.

The office of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins declared that the USDA’s reports—considered by researchers the gold standard for measuring hunger in America—“do nothing more than fear monger.” They are, in her words, “liberal fodder.”

Rollins asserted, “Trends in the prevalence of food insecurity have remained virtually unchanged.”

But this is simply a lie. Last year’s report showed that in 2023, 19 percent of America’s children were classified as “food insecure,” meaning they lived in households that “had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members because of a lack of resources.” In simple language, nearly one in five of America’s children

were hungry.

Last year’s report showed a sharp increase in hunger from 2021, when 13 percent of America’s children were classified as food insecure.

Hunger in America has increased further due to the combination of soaring food prices, stagnating wages, growing unemployment and the Trump administration’s unrelenting assault on social programs.

This year, the administration has cut millions of dollars in federal aid to food banks, and Trump’s “big beautiful bill” included the largest cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps, in years.

The most palpable driver of hunger is the surge in food prices. Since February 2020, the price of steak has increased by 54 percent and ground beef by 51 percent.

As a result, Americans are simply buying less beef. “We’re seeing people opt away from beef,” Chris Dubois of the spending research firm Circana told National Public Radio.

Instead, more Americans are turning to Hamburger Helper, a filler food marketed to stretch smaller quantities of meat into larger portions. Sales of the product are up 14.5 percent over the past year. Sales of rice are up 7.5 percent as are sales of canned beans. “Beans and rice,” popularized by the self-help guru Dave Ramsey, are becoming the national diet.

But it’s not just the soaring cost of food straining workers’ budgets, it’s the money to pay for it. Despite the dizzying rise of stock prices and cryptocurrencies, the real economy is stalling.

The Labor Department’s monthly jobs figures have shown a marked trend downward over the course of the year, and, for the first time since the 2020 recession, the US economy actually lost jobs in June. The trend is driven by mass layoffs throughout the economy.

The current spate of layoffs is targeting the white-collar workforce, particularly in the technology sector, as companies implement AI tools to increase productivity, and, in turn, slash their workforces. In September alone, XAI, Rivian, Oracle and Salesforce announced hundreds of

layoffs despite these companies' surging share values. Amid these layoffs, *Newsweek* commented, "It's the Worst Time to Be a College Graduate in Years."

But analysts warn that while the white-collar workforce has been targeted first, often because their jobs are easier to automate using AI tools, AI-driven automation will lead to hundreds of thousands of layoffs among the blue-collar workforce in the coming months and years.

Once workers lose their jobs, they are staying unemployed longer than at any time in recent memory. This month's jobs report showed that 26 percent of jobless Americans have been out of work for 27 weeks or more, the highest share since the 2021 recession. There are 1.9 million long-term unemployed Americans, up from 1.1 million in January 2023.

The combination of soaring prices, stagnating wages and declining job prospects are driving a surge in poverty across the US. Detroit, hailed as undergoing an economic turnaround, saw its poverty rate increase to 34.5 percent last year, the highest level since 2007. A report published by Columbia University found that one in four New Yorkers could not afford food and housing, and that the poverty rate had increased by seven percentage points in just two years.

But at the other pole of society, things have never been better. The Trump administration has been a bonanza for America's oligarchy.

Since the November 5, 2024 election, America's 10 wealthiest individuals have seen their combined wealth soar by \$703 billion, or 41 percent, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Ellison, who owns the sixth-largest Hawaiian island, saw his wealth soar by \$180 billion. Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, the world's richest man, saw his wealth increase by \$176 billion over this period.

In 1975, the top 1 percent of income earners received 10 percent of the national income. Today, they take in over 20 percent. And the share of national income earned by the bottom 50 percent has collapsed—from 20 percent in 1975 to just 13 percent today, according to figures from the inequality researcher Gabriel Zucman.

The vast wealth of the financial elite was put on display last week when US President Donald Trump, flanked by billionaires, including Rupert Murdoch and Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman, alongside Apple CEO Tim Cook and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, traveled to the UK's Windsor Castle to attend a banquet as the guests of the British monarchy.

The Trump administration's frontal assault on social programs is an attempt to defend and enrich the wealth of this oligarchy amid a deepening and escalating crisis. All social programs, from food assistance to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, are on the chopping block.

The White House is seeking to cover up the prevalence of hunger in America because it knows its policies will lead to a vast rise in all forms of social misery. Reducing the health, well-being and longevity of the American population is not a byproduct of Trump's policies; it is the goal.

The move by the Trump administration to suspend the USDA's hunger report is ultimately an action of desperation and fear. Despite facing no meaningful opposition from the Democratic Party, the White House knows that the deepening economic crisis, and the uncontrollable increase in the cost of living, is putting America's oligarchy, and its state, on a collision course with the working class.

It is this fear that is driving the Trump administration, speaking for the financial oligarchy, to attempt to erect a dictatorship in the United States. Social antagonisms in America have reached such a vast level that they cannot be contained within democratic forms of rule. Trump faces no opposition by the Democratic Party because the entire political establishment speaks for the oligarchy whose wealth Trump has pledged to defend and expand.

More and more, Trump is speaking the language of civil war, with the target of this war being the American population.

The deepening economic and social crisis will lead workers into struggle. As the Socialist Equality Party explained in its statement published Friday, "Trump's Fascist Conspiracy and How to Fight It: A Socialist Strategy:"

This movement, led by the working class, requires a program that accurately reflects socio-economic realities and corresponds to the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population. The capitalist oligarchy has declared war on the working class. The necessary response is the declaration of war by the working class on capitalism which must result in the socialist reorganization of society.



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