

Trump's threats against food stamps: A weapon of class war

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The Trump administration's declaration that it will allow food stamp funding to expire on November 1 unless the Democrats surrender to end the shutdown is an act of sheer cruelty. Tens of millions of Americans could go hungry during the month of Thanksgiving, while the oligarchy behind Trump celebrates record share values.

Last week, the Department of Agriculture announced that it would not draw upon \$6 billion in emergency reserves to continue the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the main federal food aid program.

The Trump administration is using the lives of 42 million people who rely on SNAP as political blackmail. Two-thirds of recipients are in households with children. The program was estimated to lift 3 million people out of poverty in 2023. Already, 5 percent of US households are classified as suffering from "very low food security," a government euphemism for households forced to reduce food intake or skip meals altogether. These figures would rise dramatically if food stamp funding expires.

Officials justified the decision not to use emergency funding on the bogus grounds that such a move would be "illegal" without congressional authorization.

Even if this were true, it has never stopped Trump before. It did not prevent him from redirecting \$8 billion in federal funds, supplemented with a \$130 million donation from a fellow billionaire, to pay soldiers to ensure their loyalty as they are deployed in US cities and as the White House prepares for war against Venezuela. That donation, as well as the \$300 million gift from tech billionaires to build a new White House ballroom, expresses the erasure of any division between the oligarchy and the government.

The deliberate use of hunger as a political weapon has

precedents in the most brutal regimes in history. Today, the Netanyahu government is employing starvation as a key instrument of genocide in Gaza. The Hitler-lover Trump is well aware of the Nazi regime's "Hunger Plan," implemented during World War II to starve tens of millions in Eastern Europe.

It is no exaggeration to say that Trump is using the threat of starvation as a weapon of class war within the United States. Whatever happens in the next several days, the callous indifference now on display is unmistakable. If Trump had his way, many of the 42 million SNAP recipients—children, the elderly, the disabled—would be allowed to starve as "life unworthy of life," to use the infamous Nazi phrase.

Around the same time as the food stamp announcement, Trump insider Steve Bannon publicly confirmed the existence of a conspiracy to keep Trump in the White House beyond the constitutional term limit in 2028.

"We're in political war," Bannon said, explaining that their strategy is to "seize the institutions and then purge them." Trump himself has declared his intention to eliminate "Democrat" and "semi-communist" programs, by which he means the limited welfare and entitlement measures upon which tens of millions depend for survival.

The shutdown is proceeding according to a worked-out plan: to use the crisis as a pretext to seize personal control of the executive branch, usurp Congress's power of the purse and purge the federal workforce of perceived opponents.

Even before the shutdown, Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" passed over the summer slashed \$180 billion from food stamps, and over 20 million people are set to lose some or all benefits next month under new eligibility restrictions. The law also included more than \$800

billion in Medicaid cuts. Also looming is the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits for private health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, which would lead to massive premium increases.

Scenes in Washington last week captured the growing desperation. Hundreds of furloughed or terminated federal workers lined up outside food pantries. Air traffic controllers, who will receive their first zero-dollar paychecks today, are dealing with nationwide flight delays and cancellations due to staffing shortages.

This is not the product of one man. It is the outcome of a capitalist ruling class whose interests are incompatible with even the most basic necessities of human life.

Beneath the surging share values and trillions added to the wealth of the billionaires, American capitalism is approaching the point of bankruptcy, with a new recession looming and federal debt reaching unsustainable levels.

The solution of the ruling class is to reduce workers to poverty, in order to pay for the crisis and fund new wars against Russia and China to conquer markets and supply chains. Amazon plans to automate half a million jobs out of existence in the next few years. Total layoffs for this year are approaching 1 million, one of the highest levels on record.

The ruling class is terrified of the growing threat of social revolution. This was expressed in the brutal ultimatum delivered Monday by House Speaker Mike Johnson, who demanded of the Democrats: “Am I going to starve my constituents? Or am I going to appease the Marxist?”

In fact, the Democrats refuse to call on anyone to do anything against Trump, terrified that a genuine social movement would turn into a struggle against capitalism itself. Their response to the impending expiration of food stamps has been a combination of finger-wagging and groveling before Trump.

The union bureaucracy is also working to chloroform opposition in the working class. A statement released Monday by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) does not even mention food stamps or Trump by name. It dissolves all responsibility for this catastrophe into the vague language of “partisan politics” and calls on “*our leaders* [emphasis added] to start focusing on how to solve problems for the

American people.”

The real threat to dictatorship comes from below. There is a growing radicalization taking place across every section of workers. The critical issue is the building of an independent movement of the working class against Trump and the capitalist system that created him.

Workers are not just the majority of the country and the source of all wealth. Their struggle against capitalist exploitation leads it into revolutionary struggle, making the working class the real bearer of equality and genuine democracy. When Trump speaks of fighting the “enemy within,” he means above all the working class itself.

The crisis of American society cannot be resolved outside of a massive movement directed against the unchallenged privileges of the oligarchy, Trump’s real social base. The defense of democratic rights must be fused with the demand that workers possess inalienable social rights—the right to employment, to adequate food, to healthcare, to a stable environment and to all the basic necessities of a decent human life.

As the Socialist Equality Party explained in its statement, “After the ‘No Kings’ protests: What Next?”: “The task now is not to wait passively for the next demonstration but to use this opposition as a lever in the fight for a movement of the working class for socialism.”



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