There's one thing about the present situation. Every day a piece of news reminds us that we live in a global world where the consequences of human activity are not limited to national boundaries. Whether it's the Covid pandemic with its rapidly morphing virus, or the last minute attempts to reduce global warming and the wider ecological damage — mainly from the last 200 years — that is threatening life on earth, we all know that the remedies have to be global.

Such intractable problems cannot simply be put down to individual life-style choices. As if most of us have any significant choice about how we live. Like it or not, we live in a capitalist world where almost every aspect of our lives is shaped by the money economy underpinning capitalism and its whole reason for existence: profit making. Credit cards, pound notes, dollar bills, coins, or even bitcoins: we can't live without money. We have to pay for the very means to live: food, clothes, a roof over our heads, never mind holidays and 'leisure pursuits'. Pensioners aside, that means at least two-thirds of the counties it was able to trade on. (Not every country welcomed the UN trackers!) In the remaining third of countries — including Brazil, Canada, France, Italy and the US — an increase in average wages was the result not of pay rising, but of large numbers of low paid workers losing their jobs or 'leaving the labour market'. It's amazing what we can learn from statistics! Seriously, the ILO stats only confirm the bigger picture: unemployment is rising and wages are falling. It's getting harder and harder to earn a living.

The Logic of Capital

This, despite a world overflowing with consumer goods, where nobody needs to go hungry or be without the necessities of life. It doesn't make sense. But there is a kind of capitalist logic to it all. The motive force of capitalism is not to promote the health and well-being of humanity, but to maximise profits. The constant push to increase productivity by reducing the cost of labour power and raw materials is the source of capitalism's dynamism. But it's also the cause of capitalism's fatal tendency to economic crisis and collapse. Given the ever-larger capital outlay needed to generate a further round of profit-taking there comes a point when the rate of profit is so low, that instead of investing in the 'real economy', firms are saving more than they prefer to... pay their chief executives huge bonuses; gamble on the stock exchange; borrow at low interest rates to re-finance existing debts while going through the motions of daily business activity (zombie companies); or simply declare themselves bankrupt and shut up shop. Meanwhile the drive to get more work out of fewer workers for less cost is stepped up. 'Flexible', i.e. insecure, precarious work with no guaranteed weekly wage continues to replace what is left of the monotonous old working week. These sorts of attacks are not new. For decades now we have been tracking and tracing the constant attacks on workers' pay, on their working and living conditions, on their declining 'share' in gross national product as the capitalists push the cost of their profits crisis onto the working class.

The Covid Double Whammy

Then, along comes Coronavirus. The economy — in and out of lockdown — is put on hold with Rishi Sunak's furlough scheme granting laid off workers 80% of pay and the bureaucratic obstacles to claiming Jobseeker's Allowance reduced for the newly unemployed. But, like the suspension of eviction, orders for tenants who can't pay their rents, it's not going to last. In any case these measures are nowhere near enough to compensate for the lost earnings of a growing portion of working class households. While the comfortable middle class the BBC likes to present as the Covid poor have their 'disposable income', many more (as often as not 'key workers') are finding that they haven't enough income to buy the necessities of life. It shouldn't take a social survey to find that Covid-positive people who earned less than £20,000 per year or had less than £100 in savings, were three times less likely to self isolate than anyone else. Especially since the UK has the lowest sick pay in the OECD and for the almost 2m low-paid workers who earn less than £120 a week, it is zero. Let's face it. This is an all-out class war. While the work-at-home middle class look to buy a bigger house in the countryside where they can listen to bird song, 'key' workers are having to resort to the soup kitchens which are now supplementing food banks.

The Logic of Crisis

The contradiction in the capitalist system is that it is the source of capitalism's dynamism. But it's also the cause of capitalism's fatal tendency to economic crisis and collapse. Given the ever-larger capital outlay needed to generate a further round of profit-taking there comes a point when the rate of profit is so low, that instead of investing in the ‘real economy’, firms are saving more than they prefer to... pay their chief executives huge bonuses; gamble on the stock exchange; borrow at low interest rates to re-finance existing debts while going through the motions of daily business activity (zombie companies); or simply declare themselves bankrupt and shut up shop. Meanwhile the drive to get more work out of fewer workers for less cost is stepped up. 'Flexible', i.e. insecure, precarious work with no guaranteed weekly wage continues to replace what is left of the monotonous old working week. These sorts of attacks are not new. For decades now we have been tracking and tracing the constant attacks on workers' pay, on their working and living conditions, on their declining 'share' in gross national product as the capitalists push the cost of their profits crisis onto the working class.

More Attacks Already Underway

Far from the Vaccine roll-out bringing relief, bosses are seizing crisis-driven capitalism as before. It's no good pretending there are blue skies around the corner. Unless and until the global working class realises its common interests and embarks on the journey to overthrow capitalism in order to create a new world of freely associated producers, the prospect is grim. Yet, out of this grim situation, shafts of light exist.

New political groups are appearing who are eager to learn from the whole gamut of workers' previous victories and defeats and who recognise the need for a political compass to guide the international working class struggle. The International Communist Tendency to which the CWO belongs is growing. From its original political impulse in the shape of Battaglia Comunista in Italy amongst other things, currently conducting a political battle against rival commodity, unions with a vying (for workforce support), the ICT groups in the USA and Canada have worked jointly to produce their online political journal,2191. At the same time the hard work of learning how to best contribute to the class struggle ‘on the ground’ is going ahead. How to respond to a scandalous housing crisis, to a scandalous housing crisis...
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