American capitalism in its self-asserted manner has come face to face with quick mobilization to support finance capital, the American federal government has also begun extensive slashing of social services to make up for costs. Reforms to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), now provide for only 3 months of food stamps unless participants are working to receive more in the future. A holiday for student loan interest has also been proposed. However, graduates will still need to go to work to be able to pay off their loans if they are to hope to be rid of as much debt as possible before the interest rate returns. Even the supposed support for the fuel of capitalist social reproduction in the form of the viral outbreak – it truly becomes every person for themselves. The ruling class has shown where their priorities lie, and it’s not with the working class, but with the accumulated economic value derived from successful markets and profitability. To keep the economy going, the ruling class will continue to force working class people to keep working through the pandemic to ensure this happens.

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WOBBLIES: NOTES FROM THE FRONT LINES OF THE CLASS WAR

From a Machinist in Wisconsin, Regarding Work Continuation

“If your manufacturing facility has allowed the office staff to go home and be safe then why not the workers? Do not wait for your boss or your elected officials to give a shit about your well-being, your life is literally on the line.”

Rank and File Mechanic Actions at American Airlines

It comes as no surprise when word of airlines mistreating their employees appear in the news. Anyone from front line i.e. ticket agents, gate agents and cabin crew members. pilots and flight attendants, even down to the very people who are given the greatest task of all in keeping the aircraft running safely – the mechanics. Until recently, in January 2020 when the mechanics union IWW-SAMI filed grievances and strikes were able to come about a tentative $4.2 billion agreement. One that took countless fighting, millions of dollars in delayed and canceled flights and one man’s freedom. Last May 2019, mechanics at American Airlines made a threat for what they called the “bloodiest, ugliest battle” in labor history. It would be another seven months before the agreement would be reached and, in that time, mechanics had a plan of their own.

American Airlines accused the unions representing their mechanics of purposeful slowdowns in maintenance repairs as a way of beating the airline into submission. The subsequent cost of these actions were more than 900 flight cancellations and delays in the course of only two months. In addition to working slowly, mechanics would write up issues that may otherwise be left unchecked until a major overhaul effectively grounding the aircraft until repairs are made. This was the time when the Boeing 737 MAX jets were grounded and airlines were already scrambling to re-accommodate flights with their remaining fleet. In American’s court filing they claimed the unions had caused them “enormous financial losses and untold harm to customer good will”.

Pandemics, Profits And Proles

Much has been written in the course of the COVID-19 crisis about the necessity of public health infrastructure. In the United States, the pandemic has amplified social-democratic calls for a public healthcare system. Medical research and pharmaceutical development are often left out of these demands. The present situation demonstrates that state health insurance is not enough to protect human health. All aspects of medicine – education, research, industry, infrastructure, and clinical practice – must be centralized under the proletariat’s control.

The example of Remesdivir, an antiviral drug developed by Gilead Sciences, illustrates the issues inherent in medical development for profit. Gilead, the thirteenth-largest pharmaceutical company in the world, has been reluctant to participate in drug trials in China for fear of losing control of its intellectual property. A Chinese research laboratory, for its part, has applied for a patent on the use of Remesdivir to treat COVID-19. As the number of infections and deaths grows by the day, international capitalism remains concerned with its property regime.

The search for a vaccine further demonstrates the failing of bourgeois medicine. At present there are at least 20 separate companies working on vaccine development. Each has its own profit motives, its own methods, and its own intellectual property concerns. The countries in which they operate have their own national interests. The extent to which private and academic institutions are also running their own searches. This epitomizes the anarchy of production. If ever there has been a time for the centralization of the medical industry, it is in response to the current pandemic.

The international proletariat should have exclusive and unified control over all aspects of medicine. Medical discoveries are the common possession of all of humanity, this is an anarchy of production. If ever there has been a time for the centralization of the medical industry, it is in response to the current pandemic.