

To the Editor March 30, 2020

Reality Check Time!

This Novel Covid-19 virus is everywhere and we just do not know it. It is out there spreading symptomless, by people of all ages. People shed this virus for a week before symptoms arise, and the symptoms vary widely from weak to strong and young to old. At this point, we are helpless to test for it. When we can start testing in volume, we may not know the false positive and false negative rates. It will most likely be one to two years before an effective vaccine is available. This will change our world. It will also change our:

- Political System
- Economic System
- Social System

How might this happen you ask? Here is my best guess on how it could happen.

Political

Politicians and the donor class were warned in secret that this would be worse than the 1918 Pandemic. Just in time to sell their millions in hotel stocks and buy millions in teleconferencing stocks, while issuing platitudes like “we’ve got this” to the public. In the near future, we will not be able to maintain even the distant resemblance to a democracy that we have now. Our political system could go one of two ways. Toward a democratic socialist society where we all take care of each other better than we do now (Like Europe, Canada, the UK, and Scandinavia). We would share the natural wealth of our land and the earned efforts of our population; provide for affordable healthcare, childcare, education, and employment, while making the criminal justice and immigrations systems more fair and compassionate. Alternatively, much more likely, I fear, continue accelerating the existing vulture capitalist corporate fascistic system we have been ramping up to for the last forty years. Financial market worship however, may turn out to be a death cult.

Economic

The tourism industry will be gone. No Disneyland, theme parks, waterparks, beach resorts etc. Say goodbye to these jobs.

The team sports industry will be gone. No NFL, No MLB, No NBA. Say goodbye to these jobs.

The cruise ship industry will be gone. Say goodbye to these jobs. (Based on their experience with infective disease, it should have been gone already)

Small business will mostly be gone. Say goodbye to these jobs. This will be an extinction event for the majority of small business of all types. (You will buy online from Amazon, Walmart, and Costco, that is it)

Corporate IT networks and Private IT business will all be gone. Say goodbye to these jobs. Everything will be in the cloud, accessed by dumb machines like smart (sic) phones, and iPads.

Music concerts and movie theaters will be gone. Shopping malls were on their way out anyway, and this virus will kill them dead.

Hotels and motels will be gone. Who would stay in one after all of this?

Manufacturing will become more robotic and require less humans for social distancing reasons.

Classrooms full of students, primary, secondary, and post-secondary will be gone. Say goodbye to these jobs. All education will be virtual and online. Massive investments will need to be made to expand the Internet bandwidth and provide service to the more than 15% of households who do not have it now. This will require a Federal program like Rural Electricity or Rural Free Delivery mail. Better yet, the Internet should become a public utility like the gas and electric companies are now. Corporations have promised but not delivered on this connectivity, despite massive government financial incentives, for more than thirty years.

Only about 30% of the population can work from home now. That will need to increase by 50%.

We need our politicians to think hard about which of these industries are essential and future proof enough to prop up, and which should be allowed to die off.

Social

Those states or counties, who refuse to accept the existing reality, will be shunned as pariah states. No one will want to interact with them, and they will suffer the economic effects.

Social distancing saves lives. People will not go back to work in groups without testing.

Robotic automation will be accelerated and a government provided basic minimum income will be required to prevent social destruction and political revolution.

Surveillance intrusions into our personal lives will increase dramatically. Corporations are already using spyware to track the phones of those now working from home temporarily. Video surveillance and facial recognition will be sold to the public as an aid to contact tracing of the virus, and as a tool to monitor for sickness.

Our entire healthcare system will need to be nationalized, like Italy and France, to take the interference of profit hunting out of it, build forecasting and system wide management into it, and put patient care back in the driver's seat. Eldercare will need to be totally revamped as well, permanently.

For the 20-30% of the population who are essential to keeping our society functioning, we will need to improve health and welfare protections, and pay them based on what they contribute.

There are many dozens more of these types of respiratory viruses that could come from Asia in the near future. This should be ample motivation enough to get our healthcare, employment, financial, and social systems prepared right now.