

## **Labor Retreats to the Home**

**08-21-2020**

Much has been written and said about much work now being done from home. That should make it clear to all how de-industrialized the country has become. In 2017 only 3% of the labor force worked from home. Thanks to the pandemic it is now 42% at home, and only 26% on site.

This state of affairs is being presented as a model for future employment – forgetting that piecework labor at home was very common in years past. Also forgetting that at home workers right now, in the midst of a pandemic, understand it is much safer to remain at home.

It's mostly mental laborers that are best suited for at home work, and employers have tried to implement it in the recent past without much success, mainly because this form of labor, like those of a manual sort, requires much interaction with other workers. The great advancement in recent years in complex systems of communications has made home mental labor as efficient as on site work.

Workers at home can be as easily monitored as those working in a company plant. Amazon has installed an interesting anti-laziness device in many of its warehouses. Product pickers now have spotlights shining on the product to be picked. It knows instantaneously where everything is so there is now no time for brief moments of rest while making the search.

Artificial intelligence has been used to make many similar helpful devices for at home work. One currently in use for phone solicitations monitors the emotional tone of a sales person, some can make suggestions in real time to speak more slowly or with more energy; to express more concern about the people on the receiving end of the pitch.

While it may be generally accepted because of the pandemic, the lack of freedom at home because of advanced monitoring technology means spending more time on the job, and working under conditions that best suited for at home work. More hours on the job and a deterioration in one's health. It also means not being in close connection with fellow workers to discuss common concerns. But

technology can work both ways. It's been used to unite various sectors of the labor force, e. g., Tech Workers Coalition, Amazonians United, Rideshare Drivers United, and a united anti-Amazon entity called Athena. It's worth noting that the goddess was associated with warfare along with wisdom.

### **Economic Info**

-- Everyone knows that the rich get richer, but its still worthwhile to know by how much and who they are. The richest 12 Americans now hold \$1 trillion of the nation's wealth. They are: Bezos (\$189 billion), Gates (\$114 billion), Zuckerberg (\$95 billion), Buffett (\$80 billion), Musk (\$73 billion), Balmer (\$71 billion), Ellison (\$71 billion), Page (\$67 billion), Brin (\$66 billion), and three Waltons at \$62 billion each. (Data: Institute for Policy Studies)

A good proportion of this came from record breaking stock valuations in the midst of an economic downturn that is set to be the worst in US history. Those valuations are supposed to be based on anticipated profits, but the markets tend to be moved by a few key players. In addition, low interest rates favor the markets for investment. And if that isn't enough filthy lucre going to the already filthy rich the bi-partisan CARES Act, according to the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, gave 82% of the tax breaks to those making more than \$1 million annually.

-- Prepare yourself to either laugh hysterically or vomit; President and Supreme Commander (he is also chairs the Central Military Commission) Xi of China is about to publish an article that will explain how a non-existent Marxist political economy is working in China. *As an important part of Marxism, the Marxist political economy must be studied to uphold and develop the concept of Marxism* -- we are told in a statement announcing the forthcoming article. Much will be said about the improvement in the standard of living. But that is the result of a well trained, organized and educated work force that enabled the reorientation toward capitalism to attract a massive inflow of capital. That led to expansion of the economy and the availability of a wider range of commodities.

But now in a class divided society the working class is relatively the poorer compared to the wealth of the bourgeoisie. This will, of course, eventually lead to a revolution. If Xi were an actual Marxist, he would say China is now entering a bourgeois democratic phase that will prepare the Chinese people for the coming revolution.

-- The running absurdity is the markets, following the Covid mantra, to further distance itself from economic reality. The S&P 500 continued its record breaking streak. A key indicator of a return to a reasonable state of health in the real economy is high employment. Pre-Covid weekly unemployment figures ranged around 200,000. The pandemic resulted in massive unemployment, and now in a return to normalcy new unemployment claims should be falling while the number of those currently unemployed should be lessening -- hopefully because of jobs rather than using up unemployment compensation. Last week 971,000 filed. Expectations were for a 60,000 decline in that number. Instead it rose to 1,110,000. And those currently unemployed fell a measly 200,000 -- 28.3 million to 28.1 million. No problem for the markets. The labor problem is a problem for those who labor. But the investor class is the sworn enemy of labor, both in the sense that they intend to continue with their goal of never doing a days worth of socially useful labor while at the same time making the lives of those that do as miserable as possible.

<http://unrealeconomy.org>