

The Vaccine Mandate: Is This Becoming a General Strike?

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[Brownstone Institute](#)

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Never in our lifetimes has a federal mandate created such cultural and economic havoc. Did the Biden administration really imagine that it could outright force its way into the bloodstream of every American, simply by demanding it in a press conference?

Talk about the personalization of compulsion! People take their health seriously, especially when it involves the coercive injection of a tax-funded substance about which people know next to nothing and which has not been shown even to prevent or even reduce the infection or spread of a virus it was advertised to stop.

Doubt is the inevitable result of exaggerated promises and underperforming results. Resentment is what you breed when you smother those doubts under threats of fines and firings. And the timing cannot be worse: the jobs report was [grim](#) and inflation is outpacing wage increases. It is understandable why American workers are feeling caged in on all sides with mask and job mandates.

Like lockdowns, the vaccine mandate utterly fails to account for risk levels and demographic heterogeneity, for a virus that impacts people based strongly on age and health. The mandate treats everyone in a geographic jurisdiction as an identical collective whereas people think and act only as individuals, especially when it comes to medical and health matters. The denial of [infection-acquired immunity](#) is especially cruel because it is exploitative of the very people who were on the frontlines during this whole pandemic period, took the greatest risks, and are now told they are expendable unless they comply even more.

My inbox is flooded with personal stories of heartbreak and panic – members of the military who know for certain of their infection-acquired immunity and are facing discharge, teachers who are terrified for their livelihoods, tech workers who are trying to figure out a means of getting around the rules, parents sick of forcing masks on the kids and now nervous about shots for kids, and so on. As for those who have given into the vaccine mandate and gotten the jab against their will, they are seething in anger.

But it’s more than just passive complaining. More and more, these people are finding each

other, coming together (despite so many attempts to keep people apart and censor accounts) and starting to act. It feels like the birth of a general strike.

This phrase has mostly pertained to socialist or anti-capitalist movements in the past. This time it is different. This is happening not for a socialist revolution as the fevered imaginations of communism once predicted, nor by the owners of capital on behalf of their rights, as Ayn Rand cleverly reconstructed the old Hegelian forecast. Instead it is by the lockdown-abused workers – nurses, pilots, air traffic controllers, mechanics, teachers, city and federal employees, technicians of all types – on behalf of their bodily autonomy and their freedom to choose.

It is also occurring unofficially and surreptitiously. Southwest Airlines never admitted the real reason for the cancellation of thousands of flights (this is continuing as I type) even though everyone in the company knew why it was happening. The labor unions did not admit it either, because they knew that the secretly organized sickout would be deemed illegal according to the union rules. Instead, we have this bizarre situation in which no official organ could admit to what everyone already knew.

When there is such a vast gulf between what everyone knows and what no one publicly admits, it suggests a growing crisis. Add to that mysterious cancellations, absenteeism, declining presidential poll numbers, plus an intensifying problem with inflation, ever less trust in official pronouncements, winter on the way with a shortage in heating oil, and you have the makings of an epic change of some sort. What it amounts to depends very much on the philosophical convictions of the public, which are right now being trained in a direction to fight for rights rather than blindly obey.

In the spring of 2020, a swath of the ruling class attempted a radical economic and legal reconstruction of the social order to deal with a pathogen, based entirely on models of their own creation. When it flopped, they doubled down, rewarding big tech and big pharma at the expense of everyone else, while tightening the controls on the population. It is not unfolding the way they imagined.

More on that in a bit, but let's first address this continuing threat that the vaccine mandate will apply to all businesses with more than 100 employees. Here is an email I received from a person in the know on this Southwest "sickout."

I just saw your article "[Where are the Regulations?](#)" from October 6th. You are correct that OSHA has not issued a vaccine rule even though the president announced it would be coming over a month ago.

But you are missing the real reason why an OSHA mandate hasn't surfaced – the administration has decided they don't need to because of their use of federal contracting rules instead. By forcing all companies that have a federal contract to enforce the vaccine requirement they are getting around the OSHA requirement.

When vaccine requirements were first announced for federal employees "and contractors" the assumption was that meant for on-site contractors sharing space with federal employees. That is not what is being enforced. Instead it is for all companies with any federal contract (with extremely limited exceptions). It doesn't matter where you are working – to include at home.

This is why Southwest says it has a federal mandate. All airlines would have

this mandate, and it covers not only the pilots but the baggage handlers and the gate agents, too. As well as the entire defense industry, that is, if you are building an airplane or supplying food to a dining hall you are affected/mandated. FedEx, Amazon, UPS, Microsoft and more - included. The list would cover tens of millions of employees of private firms even though they have no direct interaction with any federal employee. Yet this is the guidance being used for "workplace safety."

Point blank - the federal government is forcing industry to comply with its vaccine mandate through a mechanism that doesn't have to even go through rules scrutiny that an OSHA requirement would. Companies are placed in the position of losing all federal business or becoming the state's agent for vaccine mandate compliance.

Like many (millions) of others, I have been given the option of either passing my medical information to my employer (who requires no other medical procedure for employment) or being fired on December 8th, even though my current work location is from home. This is the government's cowardice - sneaking something past since they know OSHA rules will likely not stand legal challenges. The only way this can be addressed is through mass action - either from employees, or from companies en masse saying it is not the federal government's purview.

The resentment against mandates is real and growing. It is a blowback beyond anything I could have imagined a year ago.

Tragically roped into the cabal of "bad guys" here is big tech. It long ago enlisted itself in the machinery of lockdowns and mandates, using every means in its information arsenal to silence dissent. The resentment against this censorship is also starting to boil over.

A friend of mine did a deep empirical analysis of top Twitter accounts and their opinions on these topics. He found that the opponents of these policies are gaining followers at a much faster rate than others. That might explain why the company is backing off some of its censorship for now, even as LinkedIn is intensifying it. Brownstone has been hit by this in particular.

These companies will push evil only so far. They will stop when it starts affecting the bottom line. It seems like Twitter might be at that point. But regardless, the public blowback against Twitter, Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Facebook is extremely high right now.

When you see how much of Manhattan real estate these companies are buying - even as perhaps 100,000 small businesses were destroyed by lockdowns - it shocks the sensibilities. Add to that the loathing of pharmaceutical companies, and you add gas on the fire.

Sadly for the future of civilization, this has also unleashed a frightening level of hatred of capitalism. This is because most people associate capitalism with whatever the richest companies and billionaires think and do. This is a huge mistake, as Milton Friedman pointed out long ago. He said that big business is typically a greater enemy of capitalism than the socialists themselves. He is right.

But you can't convince the masses of that.

To be sure, my preferred definition of capitalism would go something like this. It is an economic environment that protects and celebrates the right of voluntary exchange and

accumulation of private property by all people, according to their own lights, so long as they do not engage in force or fraud, leading to the meritorious construction of complex production structures.

That's a definition far too geeky and obscure for most people to manage.

Mostly, too, we advocates of capitalism have always celebrated the rich – provided that they get that way on a level playing field of law that protects everyone's right to trade and innovate. It's different this time. The rich this time were mostly fine during the lockdowns; it was the working class that was most impacted.

When you forcibly unemploy millions of people and block business owners from serving customers, and then other companies are given a free hand to make all the money they want, we are not talking about capitalism; we are dealing with a different animal altogether.

Hence, we have this weird irony at work. People are blaming capitalism for the most egregious overreach of governments into the economy in generations if not in the whole of human history. Why? Because the biggest and richest companies were thereby made richer and bigger. Now you see people left and right calling on the very same governments to control the monsters that government policies created.

Another feature of capitalist ideology has generally been to defend the owners of capital against pillaging by government and agitation against them by organized workers. But now we have another problem. Most of the socialist organs of opinion have favored lockdowns and mandates ("public health measures") despite their [egregious effects](#) on the working classes and vulnerable populations. The flagship publication *The Nation* has been [explicit](#) in demanding even more lockdowns.

My suggestion to real capitalists everywhere: it's time to change your tactics and focus. The pilots, nurses, mechanics, and many other workers who are in full rebellion against vaccine mandates are your friends. They are favoring nothing but the right to choose and protect their bodily integrity against physical invasion. It's the owners of the largest companies who are acquiescing to government orders.

Nor do I think it is important to quibble about definitions here. The term capitalism has never served the cause of freedom well. It's always been confusing. In fact, Adam Smith never used it. It was the Marxists who stuck that term on us, with the implication that we somehow wanted to construct a social order around the interests of large capital owners only. That's completely untrue but the label stuck.

What we are seeing right now is something no one could have predicted. Governments are being discredited. Their minions are deeply unpopular. The anger is pouring out into the streets in London, Paris, Rome, Madrid, and Melbourne. It is also right here in the US but it is taking the form of quiet anger, and acted upon in surprising ways that have severely hurt normal social and economic functioning. It's a speakeasy-style general strike.

Here is a great example of what I mean:

The crucial question is what happens next. This kind of social and political tension rarely ends in more freedom for everyone. It usually ends in the entrenchment of fascism or some dangerous socialist revolution. We cannot rule that out but things have become very

complicated and somewhat hopeful.

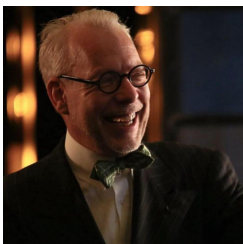
We really do live in an unsustainable situation today. It is best illustrated by the [executive order issued by Texas Governor Greg Abbott](#). It forbids any entity in the state from mandating any vaccines, while of course allowing any individual who wants them to get them. This is a direct challenge to the Biden administration, which has imposed a national mandate for anyone working for the federal government or contracting with the federal government. The order even takes a direct slap at the Biden administration. "The Biden Administration is now bullying many private entities into imposing COVID-19 vaccine mandates," it says.

In my lifetime, we've never seen a conflict this intense between any state and the federal government, nor between the ruling and working classes. This is emblematic of a pandemic policy that from the beginning was stratified not by risk, much less by age, but by class and profession. The vaccine mandate has become an extension of that same policy that divided people by essential and nonessential, elective and non-elective, by Covid and every other potential malady in life experience.

We had better hope and pray that the anger against the government and the ruling class does not ultimately turn against the free economy itself. In order for that not to happen, the intellectual opposition to the current regime needs to get its thinking straight, give up its old habits, see the current struggle for what it is, and start celebrating the freedom of everyone.

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