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Looking at Things from the Left

# **‘There’s a pandemic!’ Covid mandates, restrictions and the left**

Monday 20 December 2021, by [DERWIN Des](#) (Date first published: 15 December 2021).

We can all agree that a raft of things are required that the system is reluctant to give and that we must campaign for: vaccine justice towards the global south, wage support for closed jobs, real ventilation in workplaces, an end to deforestation and desertification and intensive farming leading to zoonotic crossovers, provision of personal protective equipment, decent health services, etc., etc.

I’m bending the stick and splitting from what seems a widely held miscalculation on the international left about immediately responding to this massively lethal pandemic.

I support mandatory and legally enforceable public health measures and restrictions when necessary, just like I support workplace safety legislation.

No more dithering about personal freedoms, human rights, state powers, bodily integrity, rights to gather, and discrimination against spreaders of disease.

The logic of this super libertarianism is that we oppose for example the requirement for face coverings on public transport. Even though bus unions have asked for reductions in passenger numbers and bus workers enforce mask wearing?

Of course the state and the police might enforce new powers discriminately. They always do. It is up to us to expose and oppose that. Because most fines for lockdown breaches were imposed in Ballyfermot or similar areas is an argument for fair and universal enforcement not for shopping without a mask or holding house parties.

The effect of this anxious and contrarian libertarianism is to give oxygen to the anti-lockdowners and anti-vaxxers and their far right Svengalis. (‘We understand your concerns and respect your aggressively demanded “rights” and freedom to hold super-spreader rallies’.)

Should everyone have the ‘right’ to go to crowded pubs and nightclubs because the ‘hospitality industry’ demands that it begins to make profits again? Which class has pushed the great ‘opening up’ and brought on the Fourth Wave?

Excluding the voluntarily unvaccinated from certain places and services is NOT forcibly vaccinating anybody!!

Some have compared support for restrictions, rather than sharpening the crisis for capitalism by getting behind the movement against restrictions, to the opportunism of some socialists in 1914 who maintained a revolution wasn’t on so it was better to push for peace or even national defense. Well, what we have now isn’t a revolutionary situation, or anything near it, and is a plague. Letting the virus rip (the Tory-Trump position actually), or vacillating about it because of commercial or popular pressure, is more like the opportunism of the Great War era. The true World War 1 analogy, where system change is seen to be out of reach, is not socialism v. pacifism, and certainly not socialism v.

defencism, it is socialism v. hoarding, speculation and blackmarketeering.

I don't understand the opposition of Sinn Féin and Solidarity-People Before Profit to legislation extending public health restrictions. Perhaps there are details I'm unaware of. Outrage on the British revolutionary left against the new restrictions, and praise for Jeremy Corbyn for opposing them against Starmer's line, seems to be the order of the day. Some say the priority should be to defeat the restrictions and get Boris Johnson out, that not to take the opportunity to topple him is opportunism, together with arguments about socialists not sacking NHS workers.

Well, actually:

"The Soviet government realized this, and Council of People's Commissars ...[... Sovnarkom...]) issued a decree instating compulsory smallpox vaccination of the entire population on April 10, 1919....This decree was reissued in 1924, with the addendum of required vaccination of newborns ..."

<https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2104/10921/2.0%20Final%20Draft%20Thesis%20JHoang%2020200416.pdf?sequence=1>

**Des Derwin**

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**P.S.**

• Guest post by Des Derwin. Tomás Ó Flatharta blog 15 December 2021:  
<https://tomasoflatharta.com/2021/12/15/theres-a-pandemic-covid-mandates-restrictions-and-the-left/>