
Lies, Damned Lies and Covid19

Description

by Michael Lesher via <https://off-guardian.org/2020/06/18/lies-damned-lies-and-covid19/>

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Well, here are some choice examples of “pure wind” that made “lies sound truthful” over the past three months:

Shelter in place. The fraudulent use of this term stands in synecdoche to all the rest. “Shelter in place” originated in US Civil Defense regulations in the context of a possible nuclear attack; over the following decades, the term evolved to mean any emergency order to “take cover until the coast is clear on order of officials.” But it has never had the slightest connection with disease control.

An order that restricts the movement of someone who is not ill, but who is suspected of contact with someone who is, is called a “quarantine.” But there are laws that regulate slapping quarantine orders on people — to say nothing of an entire population — and the governors and mayors who were bent on lockdowns clearly didn’t intend to be constrained by anything as pedestrian as the law.

So they dug up this irrelevant phrase and plastered it over their arbitrary confinements of huge numbers of citizens — in [violation of quarantine statutes](#), without a court order, and without even a semblance of public debate — hoping nobody would notice the compounding of official malfeasance with verbal fakery.

It’s worth taking a moment to imagine how this trick must have been hatched in the bowels of some executive mansion.

I can picture someone like New Jersey governor Phil Murphy (last seen claiming that the constraints of the Bill of Rights weren’t part of his job description) barking at his aides, “Damn it, there’s got to be something to justify locking up the whole state without going through those pesky quarantine procedures!”

And I can see a harried assistant, having rummaged for hours in the archives, jogging into an office with the term “shelter in place” and a rather sheepish explanation that, well, it’s not about infection control, and doesn’t really have anything to do with the present situation, but it does say “in place” and, um, “shelter” and, you know...and anyway, for God’s sake, there isn’t anything else!

And then it’s not hard to imagine the boss (who knows the media better than his subordinates do) triumphantly working the words “shelter in place” into his next public address, confident that few mainstream reporters will ask him where the phrase came from.

The imagined details are less important than the obvious fact that “shelter in place” could not have been sprung on us by way of an innocent error. The term had to be found, and the officials who found it would necessarily have known what it meant, and therefore that its use in the context of a viral

epidemic would constitute a fraud.

Thus, anyone — and I mean anyone — who has employed the phrase “shelter in place” over the last three months has been repeating a lie. It’s as simple as that. Every public health care official who has used the phrase is a scoundrel; every “journalist” who has used it is a shameless propagandist; every politician who has used it is an imposter who, in my view, deserves to be impeached or voted out of office forthwith.

Social distancing. This one runs “shelter in place” a close second. The phrase was nonexistent, or at best obscure, until rather recently; when officials of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention used it in a [2007 advisory memorandum](#), they felt obliged to explain the term in a footnote:

Social distancing refers to methods for reducing frequency and closeness of contact between people in order to decrease the risk of transmission of disease. Examples of social distancing include cancellation of public events such as concerts, sports events, or movies, closure of office buildings, schools, and other public places, and restriction of access to public places such as shopping malls or other places where people gather.

Note that this definition does not include keeping people six feet apart, stifling them with surgical masks, or barring them from inviting family members to their apartments. Evidently, not even the germophobes at the CDC were prepared to contemplate so brutal a disruption of human life just thirteen years ago.

In fact, the same memorandum stressed the importance of “[r]espect for individual autonomy” and “each individual’s general right to noninterference,” adding that even in the event the government did close office buildings or restrict access to shopping malls, “[a] process should be in place for objections to be heard, restrictions appealed, and for new procedures to be considered prior to implementation” — something never even remotely attempted during the last three months.

In other words, “social distancing” really means whatever the changing whims of our governors would like it to mean, as they continue to exercise “emergency” powers in what is clearly not an emergency. Meanwhile, the use of the term gives a false patina of scientific legitimacy to unprecedented government intrusions into the most basic interactions of human life.

The timing of the successive redefinitions of the phrase is itself instructive. In my own state of New Jersey, masks were not required as a component of “social distancing” [until mid-April](#), by which time it was clear that the number of new cases in the region was [already leveling off](#). (Masks remain mandatory in public as of this writing, even though the infection rate has fallen almost to pre-outbreak levels.)

Allow that point to sink in for a moment: “social distancing” took on a more extreme and divisive definition at just the moment that, by any rational calculation, restrictions should have been reduced, if not removed altogether! And the [most recent fiats](#) from the governor suggest that nothing like ordinary companionship is going to be permitted any time soon — regardless of the facts.

This implies that, at bottom, “social distancing” is not intended to serve any genuine medical purpose. It’s much better understood as an instrument of political repression — a way of keeping people apart

and preventing any sort of public organizing.

I don't consider it an accident that the [“phased reopening plan”](#) being [peddled](#) by nearly all media “experts,” and routinely attributed to Johns Hopkins University, was in fact produced under the leadership of Scott Gottlieb, a resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute — the right-wing think tank that served as a [major cheerleader](#) for the Iraq invasion of 2003 and whose recent initiatives include efforts to [sharply reduce federal spending](#) on health care.

(Dr. Gottlieb, who until recently was Trump's Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, now sits on the boards of pharma heavyweights Pfizer, Illumina and Tempus — so it's not hard to see where his interests lie.)

That AEI is in no hurry to help small businesses reopen or to keep working people from losing their jobs will come as no surprise. What needs emphasis is that if such an outfit couldn't hide its agenda behind the medical-sounding phrase “social distancing,” it would stand little chance of slipping its initiatives past the general public and into practice. But while we're all creeping around with our faces wrapped like mummies, turned away from each other whenever possible, staying at least six feet apart, and speaking only when spoken to, how are we supposed to mount effective political opposition as the high rollers play their favorite games?

Emergency. Though it's not often reported this way, the United States largely suspended democratic government back in March, when some 40 state executives declared “health emergencies,” granting themselves quasi-dictatorial powers to act without legislative approval or legal process.

They did this by invoking each state's version of the [Emergency Health Powers Act](#), a controversial piece of legislation crafted in the nervous aftermath of the September 2001 attacks and supposedly designed for a coordinated response to a massive act of [bioterrorism](#). The American Civil Liberties Union was [not alone back then](#) in condemning the bill as “replete with civil liberties problems” and “a throwback to a time before the legal system recognized basic protections for fairness.”

Nevertheless, liberal media didn't utter a peep when governors across the nation effectively scuppered democracy in the face of what, however threatening, didn't even arguably resemble a catastrophic bioterror attack.

If that strikes you as a flagrant abuse of the word “emergency” for questionable political purposes — and it should — you ain't seen nothing yet.

On June 4, New Jersey's Governor Murphy issued his [third consecutive extension](#) of what was supposed to be a thirty-day “state of emergency” he had originally declared — unilaterally — on March 9.

What was the “emergency” this time around? In the governor's own words: “there has now been a decrease in the rate of reported new cases of COVID19 in New Jersey, in the total number of individuals being admitted to hospitals for COVID19, and in the rate of reproduction for COVID19 infections in New Jersey.”

Got that? New cases, hospitalizations, even the “rate of reproduction” for the virus are all on the wane throughout Murphy's jurisdiction. (And have been for months.) Yet in today's Newspeak, that's an

“emergency” — enough to justify another month of democracy-free rule by executive fiat.

And I'm the Maharaja of Mysore...

I won't even bother writing about that most buffoonish of phrases, “flattening the curve.” If that ever meant anything (which I doubt), it means literally nothing, or more accurately less than nothing, when applied (as it is now) to an outbreak that is demonstrably almost over.

I'll only note that if the lockdown enthusiasts had been able to specify an actual goal, in intelligible language, they would have done so from the start. They couldn't — because their true objectives were political, not medical — so they offered us a magical-thinking cartoon image instead. They must be hoping we still haven't noticed.

As always, fraudulent language goes hand in hand with fraudulent political posturing, of which the Atlantic article I've already mentioned — oozing crocodile tears over the excesses of the cops while oblivious to the Constitution-defying antics of Governors Cuomo, Murphy, Whitmer et al. — is a rather rank example.

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As I write this, the US is teetering simultaneously on the edge of its [worst financial collapse](#) since the 1930s and on the brink of a descent into quasi-dictatorial rule. Sectarian protests, however justified, won't halt that descent. General political resistance just might. And liberal pundits are scared to death that protesters, black and white, progressive and conservative, might figure out that they're really fighting the same enemy.