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USA

# Trump, Musk dismantle the welfare state, fire federal workersâ€™” and they respond

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**President Donald Trump and his henchman billionaire Elon Musk have been dismantling the American welfare state, closing agencies and firing tens of thousands of federal employees. Their demolition operation is leaving workers without income, and taking support and services from children, the disable, and the elderly. Trump's and Musk's actions appear to be unconstitutional or illegal and have faced legal challenges from state governments, citizens' organizations, and labor union. And the last two weeks have also seen the first large-scale, national protests.**

Trump and Musk have been wielding axes, swinging wrecking balls and driving bulldozers, at a variety of government offices. Musk's Department of Government Efficiency is supposedly going after 'waste, fraud, and abuse,' but Trump fired 18 inspectors general whose job was precisely to monitor waste, fraud and abuse. Several of them filed suit saying Trump's action was illegal.

Musk's team of twenty-something techies, swooped in and took over the Treasury Department with all of its data on personal finances from the Internal Revue Service and the Social Security Administration. Several states sued and the courts have temporarily stopped the takeover.

Trump and Musk have also worked to shut down a number of agencies that protect public employees and other workers. They took over and fired workers at the Whistleblower Protection Office, National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board. The courts ordered that some of those workers be reinstated.

Trump and Musk have so far suddenly and callously fired 20,000 government workers but they have 200,000 employees in their sights. Moving so rapidly and carelessly, they foolishly fired and then had to rehire workers, such as those veterinarians working on the bird flu epidemic and other employee dealing with nuclear weapons security. The unions sued, but the judge said he had no authority because it was a labor case and told them to take it to the Federal Labor Relations Authority—whose chairwoman Trump just fired.

How do Trump and Musk justify what they are doing? Conservatives had long held that government agencies—with the exception of the military and the police—generally serve no useful purpose. Social programs for children, the elderly, the disable and the poor are not only useless, but pernicious, undermining individual initiative. And government regulations stifle private enterprise. Trump and Musk might appear to be rightwing anarchists opposed to all government, but in reality, they want a government which cuts their taxes and ensures their profits. Their motives are all too transparent and some who voted for Trump have begun to wake up.

Two large national protests represent the first stage of a mass, working class response. On February 17, Presidents' Day, thousands rallied in cities large and small across the nation under the banner "No Kings on Presidents' Day." I joined a demonstration of a few hundred at the San Diego County administration building in California where many of the speeches and signs had a rather patriotic tone, defending American democracy against the dictators Trump and Musk.

A week later, federal workers of all sorts demonstrated at about 30 "save our services" rallies in cities around the nation, most at federal facilities but also at offices of Musk's SpaceX offices and his Tesla showrooms.

“The only way we have out of this is if the federal workforce on the front lines puts out a call to the broader labor movement and enter the streets and make this a political crisis that they cannot manage,” Chris Dols, president of Local 98 of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers who works for the Army Corps of Engineers told Labor Notes. And he’s right.

PS:

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