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TRENDS ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT

U.S. MARKETS OVERVIEW

IRRATIONAL EXUBERANCE GRIPS EQUITY MARKETS. Despite suffering through the worst economic shock since the Great Depression, the Dow and S&P ended the year by setting new records. The S&P 500 spiked 68 percent from its March lows, and the Dow closed the year at 30,606, hitting a record high.

The NASDAQ rose 43.6 percent in 2020, its best year since 2009.

Among S&P 500 companies, the price-to-earnings ratio is above 22, where it has lodged for much of 2020, the highest level since 2000.

The total value of U.S. stocks, which Warren Buffet once called "the best single measure of where valuations stand at any given moment," is now higher than at any time during the 1990s' dot-com frenzy.

DoorDash went public last year, its share price soaring 86 percent on the day of its release. The next day, Airbnb's shares zoomed 113 percent, raising the unprofitable company's market cap to $100 billion. A company called 908 Devices saw its stock price climb 150 percent on its opening day last month.

Among companies that went public last month, the average share price gained 85 percent as of 18 December, the best performance for IPOs since early 2000.

In fact, more initial public stock offerings appeared in 2020 than in any year since 1999 – 447 new issues that raised about $165 billion, almost equaling the $167 billion IPOs raised 22 years ago just before the dot-com bubble went poof and erased $8 trillion in market value.

Another parallel: the market's irrational exuberance has lured individual investors. Their eagerness to cash in on the trending market has pushed up share prices 300 percent for online retailer Etsy. Quantumscape, an energy storage business, has watched its stock price rise 144 percent in recent months.

The share price for Tesla, a darling among individual investors, is up nearly 700 percent in the last 12 months, bestowing on the company a market value of $600 billion.

Unhappy New Year?

Yesterday, the Dow rang in the New Year falling 1.3 percent, the S&P and Nasdaq both declined 1.5 percent.

Why the selloff? The word on The Street is that investors, i.e., gamblers, are worried about a second COVID wave will sweep the globe, and the renewed lockdowns across Europe, the U.S., and around the world will stall an economic recovery.

Today, the Dow closed up 253.69 points on the news of better-than-expected U.S. manufacturing data and the NASDAQ was up 120 points. The Institute for Supply Management reported that its manufacturing index rose to 60.7 in December, 3.2 percent higher than what economists polled by Dow Jones expected.

TREND FORECAST: *How low can the economy go? How high can the markets fly?*

As we have reported, and Gregory Mannarino has strategically detailed, the game is rigged. There is no correlation between Wall Street and Main Street.

The market's blessings are not being shared widely.

As we reported, Bloomberg's "Billionaires Index" showed the richest 59 billionaires in the U.S. watched their net worth skyrocket during the coronavirus outbreak and now own more wealth than the poorest 50 percent of Americans.

Their findings showed that the top 1 percent of Americans combine for a net worth of $34.2 trillion while the poorest 50 percent of the country, which amounts to some 165 million people, have $2.08 trillion. The report said the 50 richest alone are worth $2 trillion.

In addition, the stock market's performance played a major role in the widening wealth gap. As reported in the ***Trends Journal****, wealthy Americans have a significant amount of their fortune tied up in equities, while the poorest tend to have little to no money in the stock market.*

About $5.7 trillion of added wealth came from stock market gains, of which 10 percent of the population owns 87 percent, and 1 percent owns 52 percent.

For much of 2020, stock markets have ignored economic fundamentals and instead have been buying the U.S. Federal Reserve's cheap money guarantee.

After the global shutdown crashed the economy, the Fed slashed interest rates, opened fiscal floodgates to ensure corporations and markets would continue to function, and pledged to keep the cheap money spree going.

The Fed also has changed its policy of ticking up rates to quell inflation. Instead, it now plans to hold rates at or very near current lows until inflation reaches 2 percent... or possibly higher.

And following its policy meeting in December, the Fed planned to keep its benchmark short-term interest rate near zero through at least 2023.

With the U.S. central bank guaranteeing unlimited injections of monetary methadone, there is little concern among investors of economic fundamentals and nothing to remind them that what goes up must come down.

GOLD/SILVER. With the dollar index hovering close to April 2018 lows, and central banks around the world locked into to the low interest rate, cheap money binge, gold hit a two-month high today closing at $1,952.

And silver, the other premium safe-haven precious metal, which was trading at $22.53 per ounce at the end of November, was up 1.36 percent today, closing at $27.73.

On the news of more coronavirus relief aid and central banks flooding markets with cheap money, gold was up some 25 percent last year and silver roughly 48 percent.

Thus, our 2019 and 2020 forecasts for both precious metals have proven accurate, and we maintain our forecast for gold to trade in the $2,100 range and above in 2021 and silver prices to move well above $50 per ounce.

BITCOIN. As we go to press, Bitcoin is trading at $33,888.

On 27 June 2020, when Bitcoin was trading at $8,974, we had forecast that for younger and more speculative investors, Bitcoin will remain their alternative to precious metals, thus pushing that price higher when it solidly breaks above the $10,000 mark.

Also, as forecast, Bitcoin prices will continue to rise as governments, particularly China, go digital. And, unlike older generations who view gold and silver as safe-haven assets, the going-digital trend will prove bullish for cryptocurrencies, particularly for younger generations who live in a digital world and are fearful of an economic future of worthless money.

On 27 October, we had forecast Bitcoin will continue to rise, surpassing its all-time high. As the “Greatest Depression” worsens, more cheap money will be pumped into failing economies, thus pushing the value of currencies down… and inflation higher.

The lower currencies fall and the higher inflation rises, the greater the demand for safer-haven assets such as precious metals and Bitcoin.

However, considering Bitcoin’s surge, we do expect a market correction. The downward breakout point will be hit should prices fall below $25,000 per coin.

OIL. After *Reuters* reported that that OPEC+ is set to hold output steady in February, rather than raising production, Brent crude spiked 5.03 percent, breaking above $50 for the first time since February, closing at $53.66.

Prices were also pushed higher after Iran detained an oil tanker “due to repeated violations of marine environmental laws.”

Brent crude and West Texas International prices ended 2020 down some 20 percent below 2019’s average. Brent Crude traded above $68 per barrel and WTI traded above $63 per barrel at the start of 2020.

If tensions increase and military actions escalate, oil prices could sharply spike, possibly soaring above $80 per barrel for Brent Crude. Should they reach near or at that level, the high cost of oil in a rapidly declining world economy will push the global economy deeper into the “Greatest Depression.”

In the event of such an occurrence, equity markets will plummet and precious metals and Bitcoin prices will spike.

DOLLAR’S WEAKNESS 2021

After standing strong as a haven of value amid the unfolding economic crisis last spring, the U.S. dollar has lost about 12 percent of its value against a benchmark collection of other currencies.

A key reason: U.S. interest rates were around 2 percent before the current economic crisis, placing them comfortably above those of most other nations. However, the U.S. Federal Reserve has now cut interest rates to near zero and pledged to hold them there for at least another year and probably through 2022, eradicating the lure of yields higher than those available from other countries.

U.S. interest rates remain higher than Japan’s 0.02 percent or Germany’s 0.58 percent.

However, as quoted by analyst Aaron Back in the *Wall Street Journal*, real U.S. yields are lower than their nominal rates, according to Simona Gamborini at Capital Economics.

In November 2020, the consumer price index was 1.6 percent above that of a year earlier. At the same time, Japan and Europe were seeing deflation, in which consumer price indices fall.

The Fed also has announced a policy to let inflation rise above 2 percent and not to raise rates as the jobs market improves.

Also, deficit spending means more borrowing, which will have a negative impact on the dollar, as will the Fed’s guarantee of long-term low interest rates.

STIMULUS BILL STIMULATES STOCKS

The $900-billion economic aid bill President Trump signed helped push stock markets to record highs as 2020 came to an end.

Travel stocks perked up, trading at what some investors saw as bargain prices ahead of a summer economic recovery they believe will restart pleasure travel.

In the new stimulus round, U.S. airlines will share $15 billion to bring back furloughed workers and resume service to cities that airlines cut off during the pandemic. American Airlines’ share price bumped up 2.6 percent to $16.06 on 28 December. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings also shared in the good times, gaining 3.9 percent to $25.53.

In an additional sign that investors see a return to normality ahead, Zoom's shares retreated 6.3 percent to $351.39.

TREND FORECAST: *There will be an economic snap back in the spring and summer, thus pushing up retail, hospitality, entertainment, travel, and restaurant sectors. But we forecast the 2021 spike will be short lived.*

The damage of the COVID War has devastated those sectors, and the job market will not rebound. Yes, unemployment numbers will decline as a segment of workers go back to jobs that were lost... but new jobs will not be created.

Moreover, wages and income levels will decline as more small businesses go bust and people take low paying jobs in an effort to avoid falling into poverty during the "Greatest Depression."

HOTEL INDUSTRY WILL NOT RECOVER UNTIL 2023

Again, despite travel and tourism industry stocks rising on stimulus/vaccine news, the rebound will be long and slow.

In November, revenue per available room – a key measure of the hotel industry's financial well-being – was half of what it was a year earlier, according to S&P Global Ratings.

In 2021, the number will improve but still will remain 20 to 30 percent below 2019's average, S&P said, and predicted the hotel industry will not approach stable, improved booking levels until 2023.

Pleasure travel will slowly bounce back this summer, but business travel – the foundation of profits for many inns and airlines – likely will never return to previous levels now that companies have learned the efficacy of online meetings.

Executives who once traveled "are going to say, 'Do I need my employer to spend money on this? Can we do this over a phone call? Can we do this over Zoom?'," Michael Bellisario, lodging analyst at Robert W. Baird, said to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Business travelers have virtually disappeared, Nayan Patel, who owns seven hotels in Washington, D.C., told the *Journal*. He recently closed one of his properties because it was averaging just two or three bookings a night.

"If you look at our numbers," he said, "they're abysmal." He expects them to remain that way this year. "If you look at the calendar" for 2021 "for the convention center in D.C., it's empty," Mr. Patel complained.

TREND FORECAST: *The enduring lockdown restrictions will continue to keep most potential travelers at home for at least the next few months, which will throw more hotels into insolvency. And, as with other sectors, the Bigs will buy out the smalls.*

CONSUMER SPENDING RETREATS

U.S. consumer spending weakened by 0.4 percent in November, the first decline since April, as household incomes shrank 1.1 percent and new weekly claims for unemployment benefits remained near or above 800,000.

Spending on goods dropped 1 percent, spending on services 0.2 percent.

Big-ticket items fared worst. Auto sales were off 3.6 percent, and major appliances slipped 1.4 percent.

Purchases of cars and appliances surged through the summer and autumn as people worried about public contact bought private vehicles, and homebound families improved their living spaces.

Spending on dining in restaurants and drinking in bars also slid 3.6 percent as worries about the COVID virus's enduring power kept consumers at home and government lockdowns closed businesses.

The drop in spending follows the end of the Paycheck Protection Program and of extended federal unemployment benefits.

Total weekly new unemployment claims could pass one million at some point this month, Ian Shepherdson at Pantheon Macroeconomics predicted to the *Financial Times*.

About 20.4 million Americans continue to receive unemployment payments of some kind.

TREND FORECAST: *Consumer spending will moderately increase as the government extends/increases stimulus and unemployment. Simply, the more money they shell out, the more the public will spend.*

This trend may be extended in 2021 should the Democrats take control of Congress... which, in fact, will be decided today in the Georgia elections.

As for America, the "Land of Opportunity," the only way to win a political race is to be a member of "The Club." According to the Center for Responsive Politics, more than $833 million has been spent on the two Senate races. In effect, they spent about $100 to buy one vote.

CORPORATE BOND MARKET BUBBLE

U.S. corporations borrowed a record $2.5 trillion in bonded debt in 2020, sending the American business sector's debt-to-earnings ratio to another record high, surpassing the one set last year, Bank of America has reported.

However, corporations show signs of being increasingly unable to repay those loans.

One measure: the growing number of so-called "zombie companies," whose interest payments have exceeded profits for three consecutive years.

The number of zombie companies is approaching the record level reached toward the end of the 1990s' dot-com bubble, according to the Leuthold Group, an investment research firm.

Also, a record number of companies in debt have seen their credit ratings downgraded to "triple C minus," barely above junk-bond status.

Still, analysts predict corporations seeking to take on even more debt will find investors ready to lend.

"It is insane," Alex Veroude, CEO at Insight Investment, commented to the *Financial Times*. "But it's the reality."

This reality has been created by the U.S. Federal Reserve, economists agree.

"The Fed has created the expectation of a bailout," Veroude said. "It almost doesn't matter" that fundamentals indicate that the markets are flying on fumes.

TRENDPOST: *To keep the economy oiled, in March, the Fed began buying corporate bonds ranging from top-rated to near-junk. The measures allowed many companies to remain operating during the crisis and avoid bankruptcy.*

But the programs also sparked the greatest corporate borrowing binge on record, which followed years of already-low interest rates that encouraged businesses to borrow their way out of the aftermath of the Great Recession.

The money junkies have widely praised the Fed for artificially propping up big corporations during the shutdown and averting a worse crisis. However, as The New York Times even noted, "the concern is that [the Fed] has simply left businesses comatose on central bank life support."

ECONOMIC REBOUND 2020: WINTER BLUES 2021

The new fiscal stimulus passed by Congress in the final days of 2020 likely will strengthen an economic rebound that will occur during the second half of this year.

The program sends a $600 cash stipend to most U.S. adults and adds $300 to weekly unemployment payments for 11 weeks. The plan also extends other unemployment payments, continues eviction bans through January, and revives the Paycheck Protection Program for loans to small businesses.

However, the boost is coming too late to save the U.S. economy from a difficult winter and spring.

Considering the new rounds of lockdown – today, economic growth will drop to 1.9 percent in the first quarter, according to a consensus of economists surveyed by the *Wall Street Journal* in December. The economists made their gloomy forecast assuming Congress would pass the new stimulus.

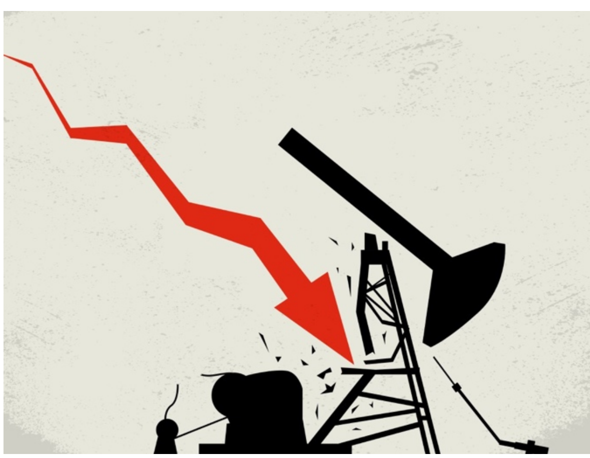
The country's GDP will now grow 5.5 percent this year, according to Capital Economics. The new stimulus prompted the firm to raise its outlook by half a percent point from the 5 percent it had predicted earlier. The stimulus package will add a full percentage point to GDP this year, according to Oxford Economics, which puts 2021's growth outlook at 4.5 percent.

TRENDPOST: *With governments slapping new restrictions on retailers and social gatherings and unemployment claims rising again, the rocky economy is likely to outlast the new stimulus, draining energy out of the economy.*

There will be no fundamental economic growth until vaccines are widely distributed and the herd mentality masses who believe in herd immunity feel it is safe to live a "normal" life.

But, overall, the economic future remains bleak. Just today, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh extended lockdown restrictions on gyms, museums, movie theaters, and many other businesses for another three weeks.

OIL AND GAS COMPANY DEFAULTS STILL ON THE RISE



The oil and gas industry will lead others in corporate defaults in 2021 and is likely to fail to make $15 to $18 billion in bond payments this year, ratings agency Fitch has predicted.

The amount is more than twice as much companies in health care and manufacturing are expected to miss; those sectors are the next riskiest, Fitch said.

Thirty-five percent of Fitch's list of "bonds of top concern" is made up of oil and gas producers, particularly smaller companies that produce 25,000 to 35,000 barrels of oil a day.

"Low crude oil prices coupled with capital market accessibility will hamper many of the weaker energy issues in 2021," Eric Rosenthal, Fitch's senior director of leveraged finance, said to the *Financial Times*.

About 7 to 8 percent of the industry's bonds will go unpaid, Fitch forecasts, far below the 15 percent that were delinquent in 2019 but almost twice the historical 4.4-percent average.

The global economic shutdown slashed oil demand and prices in an already-glutted market last March, just as dozens of companies in shale oil plays had bonds begin to come due.

When producers needed more money to pay their debts, they suddenly had far less, triggering dozens of bankruptcies, including high-flying players such as Chesapeake Energy and Whiting Petroleum.

TREND FORECAST: *While oil prices have spiked some 5 percent and Brent Crude is trading at $53.57 a barrel, minus a wild card event such as conflict in the Middle East, with the global economy going down, so too will oil prices. In fact, Moody's predicts oil prices will range about $45 dollar this year, which will be too low for many producers, particularly in shale plays, to remain solvent, much less show a profit.*

MUNICIPAL BOND MARKET IS AILING

Municipal bonds, usually among the safest places to store money, may no longer be so secure.

The months-long economic lockdown has robbed city and county coffers of expected income, leaving them without funds to meet many of their obligations, perhaps including bond payments.

Since March, cities' revenue fell 21 percent from the same period in 2019, the National League of Cities reported. At the same time, care for COVID patients made staggering demands on local governments' budgets and rainy day funds.

Cities that rely largely on property taxes fared best; those depending on income taxes or tourism have been left scrambling.

The U.S. Federal Reserve, which has pushed bond interest rates to rock bottom and held them there, has bought local governments' bonds through its Municipal Lending Facility. Congress's new stimulus package once again includes no direct aid to cities and counties.

Cities also have lost income as the economic shutdown has kept commuters from city centers, starving the economic ecosystems that live off commuters' spending. Some workers have moved away to locales with lower personal taxes.

The lack of funds also threatens the future of local governments' pension plans, many of which have been underfunded for years. Retirement funds in Connecticut, Illinois, and Kentucky have less than half the money needed to meet their obligations, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts.

TREND FORECAST: *The downward revenue spiral among cities and counties will force governments to choose among paying bondholders, paying retirees, or paying their bills.*

To cover these large losses that were in fact created by politicians locking down economies, they will impose new taxes on businesses and consumers to raise revenue. This in turn will escalate new, anti-tax populist movements across America and much of the world.

YELLEN MAKES $7 MILLION FROM "THE CLUB"

As painful as it was to hear her talk during her stint as Chairwomen of the U.S. Federal Reserve from 2014 into 2018, it was reported that Janet Yellen, Joe Biden's choice to be treasury secretary, raked in more than $7 million in speaking fees during 2019 and 2020.

Among those paying to hear Yellen yap were the Bankster Gangs such as Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse, and the Silicon clan including Google and Salesforce.

In addition to listing the companies that paid her, Yellin will "seek written authorization" from the ethics office to "participate personally and substantially" in policy and regulatory issues involving those corporations.

The Biden team has released disclosure forms from Anthony Blinken, Biden's nominee to be secretary of state. Blinken reported earning more than $1.1 million from WestExec Advisors, a consulting firm he co-founded in 2017 that worked with Bank of America and Facebook, among other clients. He is in the process of selling his equity in the firm, the forms show.

TRENDPOST: *Again, as George Carlin said, "It's one big club and you ain't in it." For example, why would Magellan Financial Group, an Australia-based asset management company, pay Yellen $350,000 in consulting and speaking fees when you can hear her bullshit for free?*

The list goes on. Remember the 2016 Presidential Reality Show® when Hillary Clinton was chastised for the millions she made bullshitting to "The Club"... in addition to the tens of millions they paid to hear her husband Bill?

Immorality and corruption in broad daylight by its top leaders has become the American Way.

TRENDS IN REAL ESTATE

COMPANIES SHEDDING OFFICE SPACE AT RECORD RATE. As we had forecast when the COVID War began, the economic shutdown will hit commercial real estate hard.

Beginning with Silicon Valley last February, they were the first to tell their employees to work from home.

And what a boost is was for them, as the tech-heavy NASDAQ spiked nearly 44 percent last year while brick and mortar sectors crumbled.

Now companies are exiting their office spaces at a pace that exceeds during the dot-com bust and the Great Recession, many brokers have told the *Financial Times*.

Real estate analysts and professionals expect the exit to continue, if not accelerate, this year. Indeed, even after COVID Fears dissipate in the coming years, the major elements of the work-at-home trend will persist.

"You have a company every other week saying how successful work-from-home has been for them, and their plans to reduce… their total office space needs," analyst Daniel Ismail at Green Street Advisors, told the *FT.*

He predicts occupancy rates will fall by as much as 15 percent. Again, we stick by our forecast that demand for conventional office space will be permanently reduced.

In San Francisco, available subleases have zoomed 148 percent in 2020 through September; in August, tech giant Pinterest wiggled out of a lease there for 490,000 square feet, paying $89.5 million to be excused from the contract.

As of November, New York City saw about 18 million square feet of office space available for sublease, surpassing 2009's record of 16.3 million, according to Cushman & Wakefield. The amount in November 2019 was about 11 million.

SL Green, which recently opened its new, $3-billion One Vanderbilt tower in Manhattan, reports having to reduce asking rents by 10 to 15 percent and make unexpected concessions to prospective tenants, such as paying remodeling costs.

Nationally, rents could fall an average of 8 percent this year, according to real estate services firm CBRE.

Property owners hope workers will flock back to their cubicles once COVID vaccines have been adopted and the U.S. population reaches "herd immunity," which requires 60 to 90 percent of Americans be vaccinated, according to various experts.

Surveys show, however, that more than 40 percent of U.S. residents are unlikely to volunteer to take the injections.

TRENDPOST: *Workers began returning to office buildings this past summer as COVID Fears declined. But with the media and politicians ramping up second wave fears and governments imposing new lockdown rules, the trend has slowed.*

Only 22.9 percent of office workers in ten major cities were in their offices during the week of 16 December, according to Kastle Systems, which tallies access card swipes. The highest rate was 27.4 percent, reached in October, the firm said.

Among the hardest to be hit in the coming years are co-working spaces such as WeWork, which was sinking in profits and occupancy before the COVID War began.

VULTURE FIRMS ON THE HUNT FOR AILING PROPERTIES. Real estate investment firms are stockpiling cash in anticipation of scooping up ailing office buildings and other commercial properties, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

Florida-based Blumberg Capital Partners is raising $1 billion to buy "high-quality" office buildings in low-tax states such as Texas and Florida, where living costs are lower than in the Northeast, or along the West Coast.

The fund to snap up distressed properties is the company's first in a decade, founder Philip Blumberg told the *Journal*.

"In this market, we expect discounts of up to 35 percent," he said. "It will be the best buying opportunity since 2010."

Blumberg's strategy is to buy properties valued at more than $50 million but are priced below the cost of replacing them.

Kayne Anderson Real Estate, KKR & Co., and Terra Capital Partners are among other major players raising funds to go shopping. Brookfield Asset Management and Starwood Capital Group reportedly already have billions of dollars in cash and commitments for the purpose.

Sales have been few so far, but during the Great Recession distressed properties were not unloaded in large numbers until a year into the crisis and peaked in 2010, according to Real Capital Analytics.

Signs indicate the same pattern will pertain now.

In November, 8.2 percent of commercial real estate loans that have been bundled into mortgage-backed securities were delinquent, compared to 2.3 percent a year before, data firm Trepp reported.

“Thirty percent of lodging loans are now in categories which have risk ratings indicating that banks expect some level of loss,” Trepp executive Russell Hughes said to the *Journal*.

TREND FORECAST: *History is repeating itself. Just as what transpired during the Panic of ’08, when the Bigs bought out failing companies across the industrial/retail/real estate spectrum, so, too, with their buying up failing firms during the COVID War.*

The result: The Bigs get bigger and the rich get richer as inequality spreads further across the globe.

It will not be a happy ending. The one, big message 2011’s Occupy Wall Street protests brought to light was income inequality: how the 1 percent owns so much and how the rest of civilization owns so little.

Our “OFF WITH THEIR HEADS 2.0” trend from December 2019, forecasting the global rise in anger directed at the 1 percent, was already spreading globally prior the 2020 COVID War.

The great wealth gap followed by the destruction of small businesses by politicians who launched the COVID War while allowing the Bigs to get bigger will be a key platform in the formation of new political parties across the globe. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, so, too, will the animosity between the “haves” and “have nots.”

Gated communities will increase in popularity, and more private security will be hired by the haves who will be gangland targets.

COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY STILL SHRINKING. In November, public and private spending on nonresidential construction slid 0.6 percent from October’s level and 4.7 percent below the amount a year earlier.

Commercial construction marked a fifth consecutive month of shrinking spending, slipping 0.8 percent from October and falling 9.5 percent behind the level in November 2019.

Building in the health care sector dropped most, with a 1.4-percent decline, followed by a 0.9-percent dip in construction in the power industry. Farm, retail, and warehouse construction slipped 0.3 percent.

Manufacturing construction edged up 0.1 percent and building of office space rose 1.3 percent. The rise in construction spending on office buildings likely represents projects being completed, as new project starts are few while existing office space sees lower rents and rising vacancy rates.

Public-sector construction spending declined 0.2 percent in November but still rose 3.1 percent against November 2019's total. Road-building expenses rose1.8 percent from October; educational construction gained 0.3 percent.

Nonresidential construction spending is likely to languish for most of this year, the Associated General Contractors of America has predicted. The association has urged Congress to invest more in public infrastructure projects.

TREND FORECAST: *Commercial construction will continue to lag as the work-at-home trend becomes the new normal, crime rises in cities, and hi-tech and big box stores take more businesses from brick and mortar competitors.*

HOME BUILDERS RUNNING SHORT OF LAND. Amid a home-building boom, first western wildfires left builders short of timber; now land also is in short supply.

Rock-bottom interest rates and a shortage of existing homes for sale have sent buyers to builders in droves; in 2020 through November, sales of new homes rose 19.1 percent above 2019's level, according to the U.S. commerce department.

However, developing home sites takes time: permits must be applied for, water supplies must be secured, streets and sewer systems are planned. Home builders often need a year or more to prep land for building.

The building boom caught developers by surprise, without enough land in inventory and under development.

In 2020's third quarter, the inventory of finished building lots dropped 9 percent to a five-year low, according to Zonda, a housing market research firm. At the same time, the average price of a readied building lot rose 11 percent, the firm said.

The tightest U.S. land markets are in Boise, Las Vegas, Nashville, San Diego, and Seattle, Zonda reported.

"The competition for land is extremely high as demand grows," Phillippe Lord, CEO of builder Meritage Homes said to the *Wall Street Journal*. "You can't just pour more beans into the top of the funnel and make more coffee."

TREND FORECAST: *We forecast the real estate boom, which had millions leaving large cities to safer suburban and ex-urban areas, will moderate and then decline in the coming years as the "Greatest Depression" worsens.*

NOT A MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR BRICK-AND-MORTAR RETAILERS

Shoppers' visits to physical stores were 39.1 percent fewer on the Saturday before Christmas this season compared to the same day in 2019. For the entire pre-Christmas weekend, foot traffic in stores plummeted 40 percent year on year, according to data from Sensormatic Solutions, a tech firm tracking store visits.

The firm had predicted traffic to fall 22 to 25 percent earlier bur revised its estimate to a decline of 34 to 36 percent has the holiday drew nearer.

In contrast, online sales in almost every retail category, from electronics to sporting goods to department stores, showed gains ranging from 95 to more than 300 percent, data from several analytical sources show.

Clothing purchases were 19.1 percent lower from 1 October through 24 December in 2020 than during the same period last year.

Online sales in general soared 47.2 percent over 2019's holiday shopping season, Mastercard SpendingPulse reported, with Amazon, Target, Walmart, and other retailers with well-oiled digital operations faring best.

Overall, holiday sales from 1 November through 24 December gained just 2.4 percent against 2019's shopping season.

The National Retail Federation had projected a 3.6- to 5.2-percent jump.

NEW YORK STATE ENACTS SWEEPING EVICTION BAN

On 28 December, meeting in a rare session between Christmas and New Year's Day, the New York State legislature overwhelmingly passed a ban on almost all evictions in the state for 60 days.

The measure renewed a ban, implemented by order of Governor Andrew Cuomo, that was set to expire at the end of 2020 and could have put 1.2 million renters at risk of becoming homeless, estimated the consulting firm Stout.

Renters seeking protection under the ban must submit a document to the state claiming financial hardship because of the pandemic or ensuing economic shutdown. The measure does not relieve tenants from their obligation to pay overdue rents.

The bill also protects landlords owning ten or fewer apartments from foreclosure if their tenants are unable to pay rent, thus leaving the landlords unable to pay their mortgages. These landlords now can file similar hardship claims with their mortgage lenders.

Many property owners balked, complaining the ban fails to distinguish adequately between tenants who can and cannot pay rent and does little for thousands of landlords unable to pay their own bills as residential rents dry up and ground-floor retailers close down.

The federal stimulus program passed late last month bans evictions from federally funded housing through January and gives $1.3 billion in rental aid to New Yorkers, which can cover a portion of back rent still owed.

At least seven million and as many as 14 million people nationwide are at risk of eviction and are as much as $20 billion behind in rent, Stout estimates.

THE RISE OF CHINA: TOP TREND 2021

As we have forecast, the 20th century was the American century – the 21st century will be the Chinese century. The business of China is business; the business of America is war.

While America spent countless trillions waging and losing endless wars and enriching its military industrial complex, China has spent its trillions advancing the nation's businesses and building its 21st-century infrastructure.

And while America and Europe have outsourced their manufacturing to China and developing nations to increase profit margins, China's dual circulation/self-sustaining economic model is directed toward keeping jobs and trade and profits within the nation, thus relying less on global trade.

While the rest of the Western world is re-locking down its economies, China, were the virus first broke out, is completely reopened. Check out the dead New Year's Eves in the western world, while Wuhan, China, where the virus first hit, had wild celebrations.

The following overview of the current economic trends further paints the ups and downs of China's economic future.

CHINA STRONGER AS WORLD SHUTS DOWN. China's economy grew an estimated 1.9 percent last year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), making it the world's only major economy not to shrink during the worldwide economic lockdown.

In contrast, the U.S. economy probably contracted 4.3 percent and Europe's 8.3, the IMF predicted.

"China enters this period" during which global economic power balances are shifting "with some strong economic cards in its hand," wrote *Wall Street Journal e*conomic analyst Gerald Seib on 29 December.

For example, China offers higher interest rates on bonds than western countries, which has drawn a flood of foreign investment to fuel economic recovery and expansion.

Also, because China was able to dispatch the COVID virus quickly and restart its economy as other nations were still struggling, it has gained market share in several industries and geographical regions and has now signed a wide-ranging trade deal with Europe, snubbing the U.S.

The pact gives E.U. member states greater access to Chinese markets in air transport, construction, environmental and financial services, manufacturing, real estate, and shipping. The deal also guarantees China's existing rights to European markets and offers new possibilities to invest in renewable energy.

The deal, in development since 2014, may not be ratified by the E.U.'s parliament until 2022.

The agreement is a signal that Europe is more interested in linking itself to China than to the U.S., according to David Dollar, former U.S. treasury attaché in Beijing. "If our allies remain engaged with China, then our decoupling" from China through tariffs, trade wars, and tough talk "would isolate us and strengthen China's relative position," he told the *Journal.*

Congress and president-elect Joe Biden share a bipartisan impulse to toughen the U.S stance against China on a range of economic issues.

However, this "escalating power struggle could tear apart the rules and institutions underpinning the global trade and governance systems," warned Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad. "This will have deleterious effects on multilateralism, giving way to warring coalitions on a range of key issues relevant to consumers, businesses, and investors."

CHINESE STOCKS SOAR IN 2020. Chinese stocks listed on exchanges around the world added 41 percent to their value in 2020, reaching a total market cap of $16.7 trillion, S&P Global Market Intelligence reported.

The figure is almost double the 21 percent U.S. stocks rose in value last year.

China's quick recovery from the virus, its strong currency, and world-leading economy drew $404 billion from foreign investors into yuan-denominated shares, a rise of 30 percent from 2019.

Worldwide, stocks added 16 percent in total value in 2020, with China's gains making up about a third of the growth.

As of 1 December, Chinese stocks held 41 percent of the value in MSCI's Emerging Markets stock index and 45 percent of the FTSE Russell's list of developing economies, compared to less than 30 percent of each at the end of 2015.

At the time, Alibaba, China's tech and online retail giant, contributed about 7 percent of the value of the MSCI, which tracks 26 countries – more than the entire nation of Brazil added to the mix.

Other online heavyweights such as Tencent, Pinduoduo, and Meituan have seen their stock prices rocket up as consumers transferred more shopping online and investors sought stocks that would perform well during the economic shutdown.

Even Chinese companies going public for the first time flourished, banking $1.3 trillion from stock buyers.

The value of stocks listed on exchanges in Shanghai and Shenzhen is nearing $11 trillion, making China's stock market second only to the U.S.'s in value.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *Many analysts group China among emerging markets. All data indicates China is no longer an emerging market. It has emerged.*

CHINA DIGITAL CURRENCY LEADER. On 27 December, China completed the second test of its digital currency, planned for national release ahead of next year's February Olympics in Beijing.

Earlier in the month, the People's Bank of China gave 100,000 residents in the eastern city of Suzhou the equivalent of $30 each to spend at selected merchants in the city of ten million.

In this test, consumers also could spend the digits online or use them in retailers' electronic pay systems unconnected to the Internet, which opens digital payment options to regions of the country with poor or no Internet access.

As an enticement to merchants to take part in the test, transactions in the electronic currency carried no processing fees, giving retailers a 0.3- or 0.4-percent spiff on each transaction.

The digital money, in development since 2014, is designed to be used as easily and widely as coins and paper money. The government also is hoping its electronic cash will overshadow private currencies such as Bitcoin, as well as private payment systems operated by domestic retail giants Alibaba and Tencent.

The government has said that eventually physical money will no longer be needed in the country, which already is among the most cashless economies on the planet.

CHINA'S MANUFACTURING OUTPUT SOFTENS. China's Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) in manufacturing edged down to 51.9 in December from November's 52.1 mark, indicating a slight slowing of activity.

Analysts had expected a softer number, predicting 52.0 for the month.

The sub-index for export orders dropped from 51.5 in November to 51.3 last month.

PMI ratings above 50 indicate growth, below 50 contraction.

Uncontrolled COVID outbreaks among China's trading partners and new infections at home led to the slowdown, analysts said.

The employment sub-index rose in December from 49.5 to 49.6, indicating that companies expect demand for their products to grow in 2021.

CHINESE REAL ESTATE BUBBLE READY TO BURST? Forty years ago, the concept of private property was anathema to the Chinese government. Today, real estate is the country's favorite new investment and now accounts for 7 percent of GDP.

As the country has embraced property ownership since the 1990s' wave of privatization, commodity prices have soared, the construction industry has boomed, and leading developers have become among the world's biggest building companies.

The Chinese economy's stunning expansion is largely built, literally, on government-funded construction projects of factories making goods for exports as well as to serve the ever-expanding domestic market.

Also, individuals have rushed into the housing market. In China, the stock market is widely viewed as risky; few companies offer pension plans; and the social safety net is small. A home is seen as a key storehouse of value and asset that will appreciate.

The banking industry has boomed as well. Real estate loans now make up 37.8 percent of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China's portfolio, compared to less than 20 percent in 2004.

But the banking boom reveals the dark side of China's real estate craze: debt.

Developers borrow so they can bid aggressively for available land, then borrow even more to build at a breakneck pace to meet demand. Home buyers, eager to lock in prices as well as houses, often buy units before they can be built; pre-building sales now account for about 90 percent of new home sales.

As a result, China's household debt stood at an official 57.2 percent of GDP as of March 2020; in 2009, it was less than 20 percent.

Because of factors not counted in the official tally, the nation's actual household debt may be as much as 128 percent of GDP, according to calculations by the research firm Rhodium Group.

That leaves families, builders, and the national GDP vulnerable to leaks in China's real estate bubble, which may be appearing under pressure of the global economic crisis.

Last October, Beijing's average home price fell 15 percent, according to JRJ Research. Prices of homes in a Hefei complex fell by half.

Across the country, housing prices in October had dropped an average of $85 per square foot from 2019, according to the 10 October edition of the *Asia Times* financial newspaper.

At the same time, the market may be saturated.

The housing vacancy rate across urban China is hovering around 20 percent and the population is aging, reducing the number of persons available to buy homes.

CHINA TECH STOCKS DRUBBED AS INVESTIGATION SHARPENS. China's tech giants Alibaba, Tencent, Meituan, and JD.com have collectively shed about $200 billion in stock-market value in recent trading sessions as the Chinese government continues its open-ended investigation into Alibaba's business practices and readies new rules controlling online companies' practices.

On 24 December, the government announced an antitrust investigation into Alibaba Group Holdings, the parent company of Amazon's Chinese rival Alibaba. The holding company has used its wealth to branch into education, insurance, and other sectors.

Four days later, the government ordered the firm's online payment platform Ant Group to hew more closely to its original business of processing digital transactions and to present specific steps it will take and a timeline for reconfiguring its ventures in financial management and other areas.

The government's mandate sparked fears of an eventual forced breakup and set off a panic among tech stock owners that regulators also will move against other online heavyweights, driving investors to dump other companies' shares.

Last November, the government rejected Ant's proposal for a $35-billion stock offering and instead drafted rules giving officials vast powers to clamp down on anti-competitive practices among online businesses.

China's antitrust law gives government the power to fine violators up to 10 percent of their revenues, which could cost Alibaba as much as $7.8 billion.

It remains unclear how much power the new rules, still being finalized, will give regulators to control on-line businesses.

So far, the new regulations seem to be targeted to online marketplaces, curbing the practice of forcing sellers into exclusive arrangements, using algorithms to set prices favorable to new users, and predatory pricing.

Making an example of Alibaba will "send a message to the rest of the industry that the authority is determined to address" these issues, analysts at Nomura wrote in a 28 December note to investors.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRENDS

CHEAP DEBT FUNDS NEW PRIVATE EQUITY DEALS. In 2020, almost 800 corporate buyouts valued at $559 billion were fueled by low interest rates set and enforced by the world's central banks.

The number of deals surpasses 1980's record and is 20 percent more than in 2019, according to data firm Refinitiv. The deals' collective value is the greatest since 2007 as the Great Recession decimated businesses around the world.

Also, from January through September, buyouts fetched a valuation of 13.5 times earnings, the highest since Refinitiv began tracking the measure in 2004.

"Given the shock to the system" from the global economic shutdown, "the way M&A" and private equity deals "has snapped back has definitely exceeded our expectation," David Kamo, a M&A executive at Goldman Sachs, said to the *Financial Times.*

After the 2008 financial crisis, "it took about two years to come back," he said.

Now, after shoring up damaged companies in their portfolios, buyout specialists were back on the hunt within weeks.

The reason: the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks slashed interest rates to or, in some cases, below zero, bought corporate debt, and bought exchange-traded funds dealing in junk bonds.

"Low interest rates have created such demand for higher-yielding debt that private equity firms are increasingly able to load their companies with fresh loans and use the money to pay themselves dividends," the *FT* noted.

Central banks' generosity, combined with national governments' stimulus programs giving companies cheap loans, ensured that few deals could fail to close.

The pickings were plentiful, with many companies selling off business units to shed costs and pile up cash during 2020's crisis.

"Ultimately, the lifeblood of private equity is cheap debt," Bryce Klempner, a McKinsey & Co. partner, told the *FT*. "When you've got the Fed saying debt will stay cheap for years, plus historically high multiples, the numbers look buoyant."

TREND FORECAST: *As we have noted in the* ***Trends Journal*** *and throughout the years, history is repeating itself. Just as what transpired during the Panic of '08, when the Bigs bought out failing companies across the industrial/retail/real estate spectrum, so too with their buying up failing firms during the COVID War.*

As long as the central banks keep interest rates low, the buyouts by the "Bigs" will grow bigger.

BREXIT DEAL: MIXED RESULTS. The newly-ratified trade agreement between the U.K and the European Union (E.U.) "above all means certainty," declared British prime minister Boris Johnson as his parliament was about to ratify the treaty.

The deal, which went into effect on 1 January, avoids $900 billion in new tariffs that would have been imposed between the two sides if no agreement had been reached.

However, about 600,000 new declarations of value on imports will be required every day, according to the British government, costing companies time and money to prepare. Some businesses will need to buy import licenses, pay inspection fees, and learn to figure value-added taxes.

For example, meat exporters will need to show a certificate signed by a veterinarian that the meat complies with the importing destination's health standards. British meat processers say the country lacks enough veterinarians to comply.

The extra paperwork could cost British businesses in the aggregate £17 billion a year and European companies €15.7 billion, roughly equivalent to $23 billion and $19 billion, respectively.

As a result of these and similar disruptions, Britain's post-Brexit GDP is likely to be 4 percent less than if the U.K. had remained in the union, the British government's Office of Budget Responsibility has predicted.

The pound rose modestly against the euro when the deal was announced but remains near historic lows against the E.U.'s currency.

Trade disruptions will be felt especially keenly in the auto industry. Germany sells 600,000 cars a year – about 13 percent of its production – in the U.K., accounting for much of Germany's £29-billion trade surplus with Britain. Britain is the E.U.'s second-largest car market and most of the cars sold in the U.K. are assembled in Europe.

The vehicle trade between Britain and the E.U. is valued most recently at $88 billion annually. Companies are unsure of the impact new regulations, paperwork, and time delays will have.

Trade with European Union nations makes up about 13 percent of the U.K.'s foreign commerce; about 3 percent of E.U. trade is with Britain, which takes 52 percent of its imports from across the English Channel.

The sudden complications and extra costs in what has been $590 billion a year in open-border trade could slow Europe's and Britain's economic recovery, some analysts fear.

"It is vital that both sides take instant steps to keep trade moving," warned Tony Danker, director of the Confederation of British Industry, in a comment to the *Wall Street Journal*. His group is pressing for a six-month transition period to allow companies to figure out the new rules and processes.

Converting from old rules to new is "a gargantuan task" for which businesses had only a few days to prepare, Adam Marshall, director of the British Chambers of Commerce, told the *Journal*.

However, "there is no grace period in this agreement," an E.U. official said in a public briefing last week. "We think that companies have had a lot of time to prepare for this."

TREND FORECAST: *Yesterday, the U.K. government essentially locked down the nation, ordering shelter-in-place mandates. So too is much of Europe re-locked* *down. Even in the best of times, the implications of the Brexit deal would dampen U.K. economic growth projections.*

Now, with economies shut down in ways that were unimaginable this time last year, the economic devastation will escalate in the U.K. as the "Greatest Depression" worsens.

INVESTORS POUR MONEY INTO EMERGING MARKETS. From March through June, foreign investors yanked $243 billion worth of value out of emerging nations as the global economy shut down, according to data from the Institute for International Finance (IIF).

Investors are now pouring money back into those markets at the fastest clip in seven years – $145 billion from July through November, the IIF reports.

From mid-November through mid-December, foreign buyers snapped up $37 billion of these countries' debts and another $40 billion went into equities there.

"Emerging markets are starting to outperform," Christopher White of Somerset Management, told the *Financial Times.* "There are good reasons to believe this will continue and 2021 will be a breakout year for emerging markets."

Returning tourists will boost the economies of Greece, Malaysia, Thailand, and Turkey in particular; a stronger global economy will boost oil prices for Brazil and Russia, "which have drastically underperformed" in 2020, Jacob Grapengiesser, a partner at East Capital, said to the *FT.*

Brazil's stock market lost 21 percent of its value last year, Russia's 18 percent.

"There is a lot of stimulus out there and [emerging markets are] the natural place for yield looking for yield," Omotunde Lawal, Barings' director of emerging markets' corporate debt, said in the *FT* interview. "Reality definitely will bite" in 2021, she added.

Some analysts predict money will continue to flood into developing nations through 2021, while others warn that many of those governments will struggle to pay debt and provide basic services to citizens, risking political turmoil.

Emerging nations' GDP probably averaged a 2.1-percent slide in 2020, Rajul Ghosh, senior vice-president at Moody's, estimates.

However, “capital spending will not be as significant in the fiscal mix as it was in the past,” he told the *Finacial Times,* “so the ability of governments to generate growth will be restrained.”

The private sector will begin to fill that space, he believes. “The exodus of capital from emerging markets is now firmly in the rear-view mirror.”

TREND FORECAST: *The lower the dollar goes, the more money emerging markets will borrow, and the higher their debt levels will grow. Gambling in the markets does not generate growth. When the equity bubble finally pops, the emerging markets will be hit the hardest.*

RISING FOOD PRICES STIR FEARS OF UNREST IN DEVELOPING NATIONS. Hoarding, drought, and logistical glitches are driving up food prices in developing countries, sparking fears of social unrest and political upheaval.

Bloomberg’s Agriculture sub-index, which tracks agricultural commodity prices, has rebounded from its June low to a 30-month high; the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) food price index rocketed to a six-year high in November.

Corn prices are at a six-year high; wheat prices have pulled back from last year’s peak but are still trading near their six-year highs.

“The real impact is the access to food,” FAO senior economist Abdolreza Abbassian said to the *Financial Times.* “People have lost their incomes” because of the global financial crisis. “There are a lot of unhappy people and this is a recipe for social unrest.”

China, which drew down its food reserves during the worst of the pandemic and shutdown, is now replenishing its stocks, driving up prices for a range of commodities and leaving a dwindling supply for other countries unable to grow enough food.

Russia, the world’s chief wheat exporter, is dealing with drought and may restrict exports. Also, the La Niña weather pattern has brought hot, dry weather to Brazil and Argentina, key producers of staple crops.

“Freight prices have doubled,” Frank Gouverne at the online Rice Exchange told the *FT*. “People are waiting three to four months for their orders, adding further pressure to the market.”

"If people realize the vaccine won't solve problems in the near term and they don't have food, things could get out of control," Abbassian said. "We will see volatility in the coming year."

TRENDPOST: *With food prices going up as wages go down and unemployment go up, there will be growing civil unrest in both developed and developing nations.*

STOCK OFFERINGS BOOM DURING SHUTDOWN. Businesses raised about $300 billion worldwide, and a record $159 billion in the U.S., in new stock offerings during 2020, the most since 2007, according to data firm Refinitiv.

The U.S. and Asia saw about 70 percent more issues than in 2019, while stock issues in Europe were slightly fewer than in 2019.

After tanking in March, stock prices roared back, luring in companies needing cash as well as investors eager to ride the wave.

Food schlepper DoorDash made its initial public offering 9 December at $102 a share and saw its price soar past $190 by the year's end.

Some observers have expressed unease about the stock market's frenzy and about dazzling short-term IPO performances such as DoorDash's, hearing echoes of the dot-com bust 21 years ago.

Other analysts contend that high valuations are due to companies' robust revenues growing out of new economic and consumption patterns wrought by the shutdown.

"People aren't trying to value things per click or per eyeball," John Leonard, global head of equities at Macquarie Asset Management, told the *Financial Times.*

INVESTMENT MANAGERS STAFF UP IN EUROPE. Ten major investment firms, including Amundi, Invesco, and Vanguard, have expanded their staffs in Europe by an average of 38 percent since 2015, the *Financial Times* has reported, and now employ 6,569 people there.

The heftier staffs are a response to Europe's growing market, increasing regulatory complexity, and uncertainties around Brexit, the *FT* noted.

Blackrock, Capital, and Fidelity were among the firms that did not supply data for the *Financial Times'* survey.

The growing head count mirrors the overall growth of the investment industry worldwide, which was managing $110 trillion at the end of 2019, a 24-percent increase from $84 trillion in 2016.

TRENDPOST: *We note this article to illustrate that in the new world order, these "investment firms" are branches of the money changers cartel that are controlling, buying, and owning the world's assets. According to Oxfam, the world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people... 60 percent of the world's population.*

PORTUGAL'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY REMAINS STALLED. Portugal's economy will have contracted 8.1 percent in 2020, according to the country's central bank, which predicted that unemployment is likely to reach 9 percent this year.

The rate would erase the 360,000 jobs the country has created since 2016, economists warn.

The Bank of Portugal also has forecast a 2021 GDP growth rate of 3.9 percent and that the country's economy will not return to 2019's strength until 2023.

The weakness is due to Portugal's over-reliance on tourism, which accounts for 15 percent of GDP and 9 percent of jobs.

The nation's tourist industry dumped about 60,000 workers last year as the global economic shutdown vaporized international travel. About 45 percent of Portugal's hotels are shuttered and TAP Air Portugal, the nation's airline, needed a government bailout to survive after lopping off 3,500 workers.

Portugal is slated to collect €13 billion in grants through 2026 from the European Union's recovery fund and has pledged to minimize borrowing to not swell the public debt, which stood at 130.8 percent of GDP in September, according to data firm CEIC.

JAPAN'S INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION FLAT IN NOVEMBER. For the first time since July, Japan's industrial production flattened in November, due to the lingering damage done by the global economic freeze and concerns about the future as the virus continues to hamper economic recoveries around the world.

Automobile production was off 4.7 percent because of poor sales in Australia and the U.S., the Ministry of Economy reported.

Manufacturers expected production to drop by 1.1 percent in December, according to a ministry survey, and grow 7.1 percent this month.

23 PERCENT OF GREEK BUSINESSES WILL NOT REOPEN. Twenty-three percent of Greek businesses closed by the global economic crisis will not reopen, according to a survey of 1,002 business owners conducted for the Athens Professional Chamber 14 through 18 December.

The figure includes 41.7 percent of restaurateurs and 34 percent of shop owners.

Many owners of dining establishments see 2021 as already lost; they believe tourism is unlikely to return in strength this year, the survey found.

Of the companies that plan to remain in business, 23 percent expect to lay off workers, including 49.5 percent of food services and 22 percent of companies involved in commerce of all kinds.

Among companies with six to ten workers, 39.8 percent are planning layoffs. The number rises to 41.6 percent among companies with 11 to 20 employees and 40.4 percent of businesses employing more than 20 people.

Thirty-four percent of business owners surveyed think the economic crisis will be over by 2022, while 27 percent see it taking two more years to resolve and 25 percent saying it will take longer than two years.

Only 11 percent believe the economy will turn around within six months.

"According to our estimates, one in three businesses may have opened for the last time," lamented Giorgos Kavvathas, president of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen, and Merchants.

TREND FORECAST: *As goes Greece, so, too, goes much of the world. Again, the small businesses are being hit the hardest. As we have detailed in numerous articles in the **Trends Journal,** there will be more mergers and acquisitions, buyouts, and businesses going bust.*

VIETNAM EMERGES AS MANUFACTURING HUB. As companies sought to diversify their supply chains during the global economic crisis, Vietnam emerged as a new manufacturing center.

“Firms thought they had a global supply chain, and what COVID showed them was that they had a China supply chain,” Michael Kokalari, economist with VinaCapital in Ho Chi Minh City, said in a *Financial Times* interview.

“This phenomenon of companies moving from China to Vietnam is just starting, and we’ll see an acceleration” in 2021, he added.

For example, Apple began manufacturing four million Airpod earbuds a year in Vietnam in 2020’s second quarter. Adidas, Nike, and Samsung are among the other companies moving there.

Still, Vietnam’s manufacturing economy remains embryonic.

The labor market is small relative to China’s; Ho Chi Minh City’s airport is overwhelmed and the new one under construction will not be ready for use until 2025.

Most companies still send parts to Vietnam for assembly instead of making parts there. Many of those parts are made in China.

However, “we are now seeing a proper build-out of supply chains here,” Kokalari said.

Foreign investment in Vietnam dipped only 2 percent in 2020 through November, reported the country’s General Statistics Office.

The country’s economy was expected to end 2020 with a 2.4-percent GDP growth rate and the government has set sights on 6.5 percent this year.

PUBLISHER’S NOTE: *Beyond the socioeconomic and geopolitical implications of Vietnam’s rising economic muscle, we note this article to illustrate the hypocrisy and lunacy of America’s political system.*

The United States, as they have with Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, etc., launched a deadly war against Vietnam in 1964 based on lies...The Gulf of Tonkin lie, which I wrote about in my book “Trends 2000” (Warner Books, 1997).

Aside from poisoning the nation by dropping some 20 million gallons of herbicides, including agent-orange on its people and bombing much of the nation into devastation, the American people were taught to hate those Vietnamese “commies.”

Washington warned that if Vietnam fell to the communists, like falling dominoes, one nation after another in East Asia would fall into communism... and those falling dominoes would hit the shores of California.

According to Vietnam, as many as two million civilians were killed and 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers died in the war. The U.S. estimates between 200,000 and 250,000 South Vietnamese fighters died in the war that took the lives of some 58,000 American young men... wounding physically and mentally hundreds of thousands more.

But now, with the same communist party in charge following America's defeat, Vietnam is now a great country to do business with; a place where manufacturers can get products made cheaply and mark up the selling prices to make greater profit margins.

The same propaganda was sold to the Americans to hate those Chinese commies who hid behind the bamboo curtain... until it was time to do business.

As the Founder of Occupy Peace and Freedom, I note this to not only express my disdain for wars based on lies that are launched by psychopaths, but to illustrate how the bottom line, not morality, is the true meaning of America's political system.

Like I have said many times, "Do you think the United States would have invaded Iraq if their major export was broccoli?

Pace e Amore,
Gerald Celente

TRENDS IN THE MARKETS *by Gregory Mannarino*

MARKETS 2021: MASSIVE UNDERLYING DEBT CRISIS

Many of my articles for the **Trends Journal** in 2020 had a common theme: the stock market and cryptocurrencies were going higher. As predicted, both the stock market and crypto have skyrocketed, hitting new, all-time record highs as 2020 came to a close.

Another common thread in my articles has been that the U.S. dollar free fall would accelerate. Recently, the U.S. dollar hit a multi-year low versus other world currencies.

As we begin the new year of 2021, I am here to tell you again that these trajectories for the stock market, cryptocurrencies, and the U.S. dollar will continue.

Although not apparent from the "outside," the U.S. economy is actually in full-on collapse. In the last week of December, first time unemployment claims came in at a staggering 885,000. This follows another forecast I have warned about in my articles for the **Trends Journal:** the U.S. economic meltdown would get worse. Currently, the U.S. debt and trade deficits are ballooning again. This trend, which I have called correctly, will continue.

I have also written frequently that the Federal Reserve would vastly inflate its balance sheet. In March of 2020, the Fed's balance sheet stood at $4.1 trillion. In December, it was well on its way to doubling.

The Federal Reserve's frantic effort to inflate its balance sheet is going to continue as well. Its swelling balance sheet is causing a gigantic ripple effect across the spectrum of asset classes, and we are seeing this in real time: the hyper-inflated stock market, record high price action regarding cryptocurrencies, and the dollar free fall.

What most people do not realize is that the Federal Reserve is funneling trillions of U.S. dollars to other central banks around the world in a mechanism called "currency swaps," and this process is accelerating. It is, however, commonly known that the Fed is vastly inflating its balance sheet by creating cash out of thin air and buying debt. Known as "quantitative easing," the process of the Fed buying the debt with cash created out of thin air has pushed the stock market into record territory.

This quantitative easing process is also robbing the U.S. dollar of purchasing power. The action of the Federal Reserve is creating epic distortions across the entire global financial system, threatening a total meltdown in the debt market. The Federal Reserve is desperately trying to prevent, for now, a credit freeze, which will affect the entire financial system. (A "credit freeze" is complete lock up of the monetary system.)

Understand that none of what the Fed is doing is by accident, nor is it a plan to fix the current system. They are deliberately attempting to bring about a global debt crisis to usher in a wholly new financial system.

Problem, Reaction, Solution

It is always the same method of control: Allow a problem to manifest itself, wait for the public reaction, and then offer a pre-determined solution.

The current actions of the Federal Reserve, in concert with other world central banks, and the distortions now existing in the markets, is, by design, all a set up.

It's only a matter of time before the world faces a debt crisis on a truly epic scale brought about deliberately by those in charge of the financial system. These same entities will wait for the public outcry... expect pandemonium in the streets. And then they will usher in a new system, again under their full control.

By Gregory Mannarino, TradersChoice.net

TRENDS IN SURVIVALISM *by Bradley J. Steiner*

In Memoriam:

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved friend, Bradley J. Steiner. May his soul rest in peace.

In his legacy, we are fighting the "Brad Steiner fight" – the good fight. The fight for each person to be the person they want to be and to protect themselves when their lives are being viciously threatened by enemies of Freedom, Peace, and Justice.

IT'S GETTING WORSE!

Coinciding with Gerald Celente's forecast at the onset of the COVID War that the lockdowns would lead to increasing crime, which clearly is transpiring, there also has been a resurgence as of late of the despicable "sport" of knocking or throwing innocent people onto the subway tracks of NY's mass transit system.

In these increasingly turbulent times, there is a lot that you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones and to work toward your well-being and survival as things continue to get worse.

Gerald Celente remains unequalled for providing solid intelligence and guidance in the sphere of finance and economics. In my view, God bless him, he is a national treasure. From him you'll get the truth… and
you'll also get his wholly justified outrage and passion, presenting, as he does, information to help you and yours survive and prosper in these awful times.

From myself, you will get self-defense and survival instruction – and, I dare say, the best and most honest. I do not pander to wishful thinking, and I refuse to be "politically correct." I realize the danger out there, and my life's work has been devoted to mastering every nuance of dealing with it. I have no political connections (unless you want to define my love of America's Founding Fathers and my unwavering belief in our Constitution and Bill of Rights as "where I stand politically").

I believe in individualism. What is most important right now is every individual's right to survive, defend himself, secure his family and home, be armed, and be left free to pursue life as he sees fit, free from the interference of predatory garbage who rob, beat, murder, steal from, rape, and terrorize innocent victims.

In this spirit, I am warning **Trends Journal** readers: The threat of insane violence in our cities is escalating, and you must take steps to provide for your and your loved ones' protection. It is dangerous in the streets of our Nation's once-great cities. It is certainly possible to become prepared and to remain relatively safe – but you need to do a lot more than "think about it" for that to happen.

If you are not spending time on a regular basis learning and practicing physical self-defense, you are making what I consider to be a big mistake. Yes, martial arts schools are closed, and in-person instruction is hard to come by nowadays.

But with more than 50 years of immersion in this field, I assure you that 90% or more of the "martial arts schools" would have been able to do very, very little for you as far as getting ready for what real violence demands. Possibly you can locate a quality teacher of close combat and combatives.

If not, you certainly can practice and learn at home. This is not brain surgery or aeronautical engineering. My "American Combato" DVD home study course will teach you, and with isolation and "social distancing" now the norm, it is the perfect time to train at home.

It will assist your fitness, build your confidence, and equip you with solid knowledge of what to do if you are ever in a dangerous situation and have no choice but to physically defend yourself. You can practice and work out with your family members, and, if you take the program seriously and practice daily, you will acquire within five to nine months the capacity to neutralize a determined, strong, criminal attacker.

Following my Survivalism articles will give you some excellent counsel on what you can do in an emergency and in how to set your mind for dealing with the worst that might occur. At the very least, please work at what I present here in these articles!

In the past, there have been numerous instances when persons equipped only with a modicum of knowledge regarding what to do were successful in defending themselves because they did not hesitate but acted when the moment arrived. They acted fast, and they put everything into their action. I would prefer to possess a comprehensive repertoire of skills, but a few good skills put into no-nonsense use when needed, sometimes – thankfully – does the job.

Do whatever you can legally to obtain firearms. In some major cities, only the police and the criminals have guns. This is absurd and extremely dangerous. Private citizens need firearms, and there is no substitute for them in certain instances. Contact the NRA for a safety and gun-handling course, and then purchase a copy of *Kill or Get Killed* by Col. Rex Applegate and study the method of combat shooting he clearly describes. You must practice with extreme caution – using an unloaded weapon when at home, and working only at a properly licensed shooting range when you are able to attend one.

You will also want to purchase a 12 gauge pump-action shotgun. I urge you to keep one for home defense, as it surpasses any other weapon you might have should a home invasion take place. Get a shortened, police type weapon. Remington's Marine Magnum is ideal, and Mossberg also makes excellent shotguns for close combat.

Knives are excellent weapons for close-in hand-to-hand defense. You must be careful here. Find out the legal length that the blade of any weapon you purchase for carry must be. You want a lock-blade folder for carry. In your home or apartment, I believe that you may, regardless of where you live in the United States, own and keep actual fighting knives. You should double check with the law where you live, personally. My advice is to keep such knives (perhaps three or four) concealed but in easy reach within your home. I would also recommend the same thing with small .38 Special snub-nosed revolvers, but of course there is the stricter regulation of firearms that stands in the way here.

I appreciate that my advocacy of, shall we say, living tactically might cause hesitation in the minds of some. Please realize the nature of the times in which we live. They are far worse than the "interesting times" alluded to in the famous Chinese curse; the times we are now in are DANGEROUS.

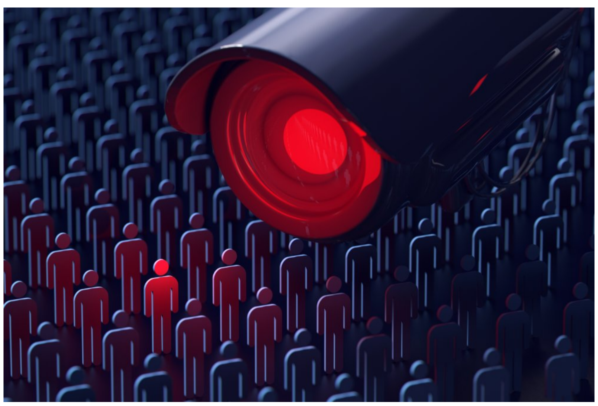
I do not say this to arouse panic or to instill excessive fear. I say it to acquaint you with the reality you would better face – before something happens, so that you are prepared for it if it does happen – and you suddenly find yourself needing to cope.

My heart is with you. Please don't let yourself and those whom you love and who need you down. It really is getting worse out there. Make sure you're ready.

by Bradley J. Steiner

TRENDS ON THE COVID WARFRONT

COVID WAR: NO PRIVACY, NO PROPERTY



When COVID deaths rates began to drop this past summer, we alerted **Trends Journal** readers the mainstream media would ramp up reporting on "skyrocketing" new cases to increase their ratings, and politicians would use the numbers to impose more draconian rules.

As we reported, with the masses living in virus fear and workers and students being forced to get tested, "case" rates rapidly escalated. Yet, ignored is the fact, as we wrote in the 29 September **Trends Journal**, testing data has shown that "COVID GOLD TEST PROVES TO BE 'WORTHLESS'."

As the polls prove, the vast majority of people are masked up, afraid to un-socially distance... and now many are scrambling to get to the front of line to get vaccinated.

Thus, while the mainstream media focuses on the latest spike in virus cases and supports continuing lockdown edicts from politicians, we alert **Trends Journal** subscribers to an 8 December article published by the Mises Institute, which contends that the multinational global corporations and their ruling clans will use the COVID War to take total control of every citizen's money, property, and basic freedoms.

Think for Yourself

The **Trends Journal** provide facts, analyses, trend forecasts, and strategy implementation recommendations. Therefore, while we find the Mises Institute scenario on-trend based on data and analysis provided, the motto of our magazine is "Think for Yourself."

The Mises Institute article, titled, "No Privacy, No Property: The World in 2030 According to the WEF," written by German economist Anthony P. Mueller, who teaches at the Federal University of Sergipe in Brazil, focuses on what he believes to be the true strategy of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The exposé centers on a WEF video that begins with the image of a smiling young man over which is the caption: *"You'll own nothing. And you'll be happy."*

The eight WEF predictions are:

1. "People will own nothing. Goods are either free of charge or must be lent from the state.

2. The United States will no longer be the leading superpower, but a handful of countries will dominate. [We forecast China will be #1.]

3. Organs will not be transplanted but printed.

4. Meat consumption will be minimized.

5. Massive displacement of people will take place with billions of refugees.

6. To limit the emission of carbon dioxide, a global price will be set at an exorbitant level.

7. People can prepare to go to Mars and start a journey to find alien life.

8. Western values will be tested to the breaking point."

What is the World Economic Forum?

The WEF is a worldwide consortium of the most powerful corporate, economic, and political leaders. Its list of members (the WEF website refers to them as "partners") is a virtual who's who of global billionaires and heads of the most powerful corporate interests including Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank, the European Central Bank, Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, Saudi Aramco, China Energy Investment, etc., etc.

These global "elites" convene every year at a well-publicized event in Davos, Switzerland. Founded in 1971 by German engineer and economist Klaus Schwab, as stated on its website, the WEF is "committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas."

TRENDPOST: *The language makes it 100 percent clear: Those who rule with money and power, not "We the Little People of Slavelandia," are the powers who will "shape global, regional and industry agendas." In essence, they are in full control.*

The Mises Institute article dissects the WEF's intention "to shape" the global agenda over the next ten years to completely control and manipulate the global money supply and private property.

In his article, Professor Mueller makes clear, "The main thrust of the forum is global control. Free markets and individual choice do not stand as the top values, but state interventionism and collectivism. Individual liberty and private property are to disappear from this planet by 2030 according to the projections and scenarios coming from the World Economic Forum."

COVID Cover Up

As Professor Mueller points out, the WEF's "Eight Predictions for the World in 2030" is a plan whose implementation has accelerated drastically since the start of the COVID War and the draconian rules and lockdowns.

Professor Mueller contends that under the WEF plan,

> "Private property and privacy will be abolished during the next decade. If the WEF projection should come true, people would have to rent and borrow their necessities from the state, which would be the sole proprietor of all goods. The supply of goods would be rationed in line with a social credit points system. Shopping in the traditional sense would disappear along with the private purchases of goods. Every personal move would be tracked electronically."

He cites a 2016 WEF article that lays out a scenario of societies without privacy or property. (Click here for article.)

Cashless & Worthless

Confirming what we have long been forecasting – that central banks would go from "DIRTY CASH TO DIGITAL TRASH" – Professor Mueller agrees the major WEF banking and corporate interests want to eliminate all cash and force a shift to a completely digital money system:

> "With the digitization of all monetary transactions, each individual purchase will be registered. As a consequence, the governmental authorities would have unrestricted access to supervise in detail how individual persons spend their money. A universal basic income in a cashless society would provide the conditions to impose a social credit system and deliver the mechanism to sanction undesirable behavior."

Professor Mueller's article notes,

> "Values like individualism, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are at stake, to be repudiated in favor of collectivism and the imposition of a 'common good' that is defined by the self-proclaimed elite of technocrats. What is sold to the public as the promise of equality and ecological sustainability is in fact a brutal assault on human dignity and liberty."

TREND FORECAST: *As we have long been writing, analyzing, and forecasting, the "brutal assault on human dignity and liberty" was viciously ramped up following 9/11, and it has reached unprecedented levels since the outbreak of the COVID War last February.*

Government/military/intelligence/tech control continues to rob citizens of nations across the globe of their Constitutional and Bill of Rights. Unless there is a Universal movement for Freedom, Peace, and Justice, the "takeover" of human *rights will persist. Indeed, just as the vast majorities obediently marched off to the COVID War, they, too, will follow the orders of the Davos Dictators.*

FROM THE COVID WAR TO "THE GREAT RESET"

Get ready for "The Great Reset."

This is not a conspiracy theory; it is in black and white.

On 14 July, Klaus Schwab, the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), announced the launch of what he calls "The Great Reset" initiative. It was based on the book he co-authored and was promoting titled, *COVID-19: The Great Reset.*

On 3 June, in the WEF's website, Schwab wrote about the purpose of "The Great Reset":

> "COVID-19 lockdowns may be gradually easing, but anxiety about the world's social and economic prospects is only intensifying… To achieve a better outcome, the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions. Every country, from the United States to China, must participate, and every industry, from oil and gas to tech, must be transformed. In short, we need a 'Great Reset' of capitalism."

On 23 September, the WEF updated its intentions on its website, stating,

> "There is an urgent need for global stakeholders to cooperate in simultaneously managing the direct consequences of the COVID-19 crisis."

It cites its main purpose is “to improve the state of the world.”

TRENDPOST: *Note the language. The WEF makes it 100 percent clear who is in charge and how “We the Little People of Slavelandia” are mere plantation workers: “There is an urgent need for global stakeholders to cooperate.”*

Yes, the “global stakeholders”: The Davos Gang. Not the citizens. Not the Will of the People who will decide how and what it means “to improve the state of the world.”

In an article written for the Mises Institute by Daniel Lacalle, PhD economist at IE Business School in Madrid, he noted the WEF’s claim sounded “reasonable” that the world now must adapt by “directing the market to fairer results, ensuring investments are aimed at mutual progress including accelerating ecologically friendly investments, and starting a fourth industrial revolution, creating digital economic and public infrastructure.”

However, Professor Lacalle says the WEF actually intends a total restructuring of private property, private money, and personal freedoms:

> “The overall message of the World Economic Forum sounds promising. Only three words spoil the entire positive message: ‘directing the market.’ The risk of governments taking these ideas to promote massive interventionism is not small...The idea that governments will promote an economic system that reduces inflation, improves competition, and empowers citizens is more than farfetched.”

With small businesses locked down, the multinationals getting bigger, and the wealth of the world more concentrated in the hands of the few, as he sees it, “We should always be worried about well-intentioned ideas when the first ones to embrace them are those who are against freedom and competition.”

On the economic front, Professor Lacalle wrote as result of the implications of the worldwide lockdowns imposed by political leaders to fight the COVID War:

> “Global debt is expected to soar to a record $277 trillion by the end of the year, according to the Institute of International Finance. Developed markets’ total debt – government, corporate, and households – jumped to 432 percent of GDP in the third quarter.”

How will that debt load be handled?

As we have long forecast, by going digital: wiping out old currencies and inventing new ones.

And, in fact, that is “The Great Reset” being planned by the WEF and the potential meaning of Klaus Schwab’s call for “the decapitalization of the economy” and that “everything that can be digitalized must be digitalized.”

Indeed, Professor Lacalle confirms our forecasts, noting, “There is an even darker part. Many interventionists have welcomed this proposal as an opportunity to wipe out the debt.”

He warned,

> “There is an enormous risk that governments will use the excuse of canceling part of their debt with a decision to cancel a large part of our savings... Most proponents of the modern monetary theory start their premise by stating that government deficits are matched by households and private sector savings. Well, the only minor problem [note the irony] is matching one’s debt with another’s savings. If we understand the global monetary system, we will then understand that erasing trillions of government debt would also mean erasing trillions of citizens’ savings.”

TREND FORECAST: *The more cheap money printed and the heavier the debt loads grow, the higher safe-haven currencies, such as gold and silver, will rise. However, considering the proof that outside interests have rigged the precious markets – for example, JPMorgan Chase & Co., which settled a market manipulation probe by the U.S for nearly $1 billion – in a criminal world, anything goes.*

TRENDPOST: *Among featured speakers at the most recent WEF annual meeting in Davos and, by association, the industrial and government leaders we are expected to trust with “The Great Reset” stated goal “to build entirely new foundations for our economic and social systems,” include:*

- *JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon*
- *U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin*
- *Billionaire investor Paul Tudor Jones*
- *German Chancellor Angela Merkel*
- *Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid*
- *Chief Executive of Hong Kong Carrie Lam*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *At the 21 January 2020 WEF/Davos meeting, Ray Dalio, Founder of Bridgewater Associates and the 69th richest person in the world according to Forbes, with a net worth of $18.6 billion, said he thinks "cash is trash."*

And, while money can't buy you love – and in the world of the daily grind you need to keep working and saving to pay your way through life – it can't buy happiness either.

Sadly, Ray Dalio's oldest son Devon, 42 years old, died on 18 December when his car crashed through a Verizon store in Connecticut.

His son Paul was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and Mr. Dalio has recounted how he saved him from committing suicide.

In an interview on CNN that was broadcast the day his son died, Dalio passionately spoke of his concern about the divisiveness of the United States and deepening inequality.

Indeed, for America, the Land of Opportunity, to return to higher levels of equality – as we see the future – not only must the billionaires generously share their wealth philanthropically, we also suggest the government reinstate anti-trust laws to break up the "Bigs," multinationals, and monopolies that have destroyed much of Main Street to enrich Wall Street.

VACCINE HEAVEN BEING HYPED

The front page of the 15 December 2020 *New York Times* exemplifies the hyped-up marketing campaign to convince people that the new COVID vaccines, comprised of RNA materials never before tested on humans, will be the heroic remedy to save us all from the ravages of COVID-19.

The giant, page-wide headline read:

"Healing is Coming: U.S. Vaccinations Begin"

Healing?

Vaccines don't heal. At best, a vaccine may protect someone from a disease.

Underneath the blaring headline were three oversized color photos. The first showed a frontline nurse being injected, another had a gloved nurse holding an open box revealing dozens of vaccine doses in tubes, and the third was a close-up of a gloved nurse injecting the arm of a vaccine recipient. To the right of the photos is the lead article, beginning with the sub-headline:

"Dread Persists as Death Toll Tops 300,000"

Added together, the clear media message that getting vaccinated will cure the "dread" of COVID takes up about three quarters of the entire front page.

Back to Normal?

To promote the vaccine as the heroic savior of our health and well-being, the *NY Times* front-page article included these highlights:

- "'This is the marking of getting back to normal,' said Angela Mattingly, a housekeeper at the University of Iowa Hospital, who was fifth in line as shots were dispensed on the 12th floor."

- "'I feel like healing is coming,' said Sandra Lindsay, an intensive care nurse who was among the first health care workers to be vaccinated."

- "Dr. Jason Smith, the first Kentuckian to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, showed off the smiley-face Band-Aid a health care worker applied to his arm. 'Didn't even feel it,' he said. A group of nuns in Sioux Falls, S.D. blessed the vaccine as it arrived, before it was whisked into a freezer."

- "Seth Jackson, a nurse in Iowa City, found himself crying on the way to the hospital to get his shot. Robin Mercier, a Rhode Island nurse, rejoiced in feeling one step closer to being able to kiss her grandchild."

As the article continued on page 6, quoting a woman who "voiced frustration with people who said they did not trust the vaccine. 'These people who say I'm not getting it, all I can say is, why? Have you lost your mind? Have you not seen how many people have died?'"

The article then quotes the nurse who is seen in the large photo on page 1 receiving an injection after noting that she, who happens to be African-American, particularly wanted to encourage Black Americans to get the shot since Blacks have been dying from the virus at rates higher rates: "I've been waiting for this day not only for myself, but to show people it's safe. I want people who look like me and are associated with me to know it's safe."

TRENDPOST: *As the* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported, the COVID vaccines were rushed through the "Emergency Use Authorization" exception provided by the FDA, and they have not yet proven to be safe in the long-term or even effective at preventing infection or spread.*

And for the NY Times article to choose an African-American nurse as the one photographed receiving an injection and then quoting her that Blacks are suffering from COVID-19 in disproportional numbers omits the major reason why: As we have long been reporting, among the most vulnerable are those in poor living conditions and suffering from obesity, type 2 diabetes, respiratory ailments, heart disease, etc.

According to the Office of Minority Health, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

> *"African American women have the highest rates of obesity or being overweight compared to other groups in the United States. About 4 out of 5 African American women are overweight or obese… non-Hispanic blacks were 1.3 times more likely to be obese as compared to non-Hispanic whites."*

The same office reports, "African American adults are 60 percent more likely than non-Hispanic white adults to have been diagnosed with diabetes by a physician."

Yet, absent from the daily doses of selling fear and hysteria and promoting vaccinations as the only way to win the COVID War, The New York Times and the mainstream media rarely, if ever, report on vitamins, nutrition-related ways to build stronger immune systems, and natural healing protocols.

MASSIVE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

The Trump administration has launched the "Building Vaccine Confidence Campaign," a $250 million effort to convince Americans that the COVID-19 vaccines are the best hope for dealing with the virus.

Radio and digital media ads are scheduled to be rolled out in late January. The promotional campaign to "convince Americans to get vaccinated" is planned to run through September.

The American tax payers, via Washington dealmakers, are paying market research specialists the Fors Marsh Group to create ads and promotions to convince the tens of millions of Americans voicing concerns about the safety of the vaccine to take the shots.

Facebook Joins the Effort

The heavy push to warn Americans of the dangers of COVID and why getting vaccinated is the best hope for safety is already accelerating. In a 20 November video interview between Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Dr. Anthony Fauci, whom Zuckerberg reminds viewers is "America's foremost infectious disease expert," Dr. Fauci warns, "We're in a very precarious situation. When you look at the numbers, almost every day either breaks a record or ties a record of cases."

In the interview, Fauci tells Zuckerberg,

> "I would like to see the overwhelming majority of the country vaccinated before we get to the end of the second quarter [of 2021]. So, in that sense I would like to see the reluctant people get vaccinated sooner rather than

> later. If they want to wait a month or two, that's OK, but I don't want them to wait six to eight to nine months."

Millions Suspicious, Including Nurses

According to the 3 December Pew Research Center poll, about 60 percent of the U.S. public now say they will get the injections, a rise in confidence from the September poll showing 51 percent. But, as reported on the Pew Research Center website, "A majority says they would be uncomfortable being among the first to take it, and a sizable minority appear certain to pass on getting vaccinated."

About 20 percent of those polled say they are firmly against getting the shots and are unlikely to change their minds. This leaves about 20 percent who currently are hesitant but whom the multi-million-dollar "Building Vaccine Confidence" effort seeks to convince.

Additional polls show women to be more cautious about getting vaccinated than men, with Black Americans the most resistant.

Most notably, health care workers, who are among most vulnerable to getting infected by the virus, are not convinced the vaccines are safe.

According to a 29 October report by the American Nurses Foundation,

> "Nearly half (44%) of nurses say they are not comfortable having conversations with their patients about COVID-19 vaccines, yet 65% said that they have provided direct care to patients with a known or suspected case of COVID-19 since February."

Given that nurses, according to the report, are "the most trusted group of health care professionals," they will play an influential role in how the public perceives the vaccines being rolled out.

Having concern nurses are not fully onboard the pro-vaccination campaign, the Executive Director of the American Nurses Foundation, Kate Judge, stated,

> "Any barriers that impede access to information and education must be eradicated now. This is especially important to engage with communities of colors. Generations of Black Americans do not trust our nation's health care system due to a longstanding history of health care inequities."

Political Divide

According to the 3 December report from the Pew Research Center,

> "Democrats' trust in scientists has risen since January 2019 while that of Republicans has dropped over the same time period. As a result, political differences over this assessment have widened. Democrats are now 33 percentage points more likely than Republicans to say they have a great deal of confidence in scientists."

As political scientist Matthew Motta of Oklahoma State University stated, "Our intentions to vaccinate are very much tied to what our political leaders are saying."

President-elect Joe Biden has already declared, "I want to make it clear to the public: You should have confidence in this." But, he added, "There is no political influence. These are first-rate scientists taking their time looking at all of the elements that need to be looked at. Scientific integrity led us to this point."

Mr. Biden then boosted his pro-vaccination stand with a much-publicized 21 December public photo-op of a nurse injecting the vaccine into his arm.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have forecast, there will be strong "Anti-Vax" movements in the United States and western nations as vaccination mandates are imposed on the general population. In the coming months and years, new freedom/populist/nationalist political parties will be formed in nations across the world to counter ruling establishments which impose dictatorial rules and regulations in violation of Constitutions and the Bill of Rights.*

Also, as we have reported, it should be noted that anti-vax movements in the U.S. and some European countries were gaining strength before the COVID War began.

INOCULATION HYPE

As mainstream media and political leaders continue to massively promote the new COVID vaccines, here are three important facts to consider:

1. On 1 April 2020, *CNN* reported that developing a successful COVID-19 vaccine would likely take a year or two: "Eighteen months might sound like a long time, but in vaccine years, it's a blink, and some leaders in the field say this is too fast – and could come at the expense of safety."

TRENDPOST: *The COVID vaccines in circulation were approved under the U.S. FDA Emergency Authorization Use protocol after only two months of safety trials. Full safety trials typically take years, not months.*

According to The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, "Vaccine development is a long, complex process, often lasting 10-15 years and involving a combination of public and private involvement."

2. The approved vaccines use a never-before tested process with RNA, a copy of a natural chemical genetic messenger, which produces an immune response. There are no long-term studies confirming safety. As reported in the 15 December issue of the **Trends Journal**, four of the 21 members of the FDA Advisory Committee did not vote in favor of releasing the vaccines. One of them, Dr. Oveta Fuller, Associate Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Michigan, explained, "My vote wasn't, 'No, never,' my vote was, 'No, not yet'… I was actually surprised at the vote. I thought there would be a lot more 'no' votes."

3. Just last week, on 29 December, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist at the WHO, said after only two months of trials, there was no long-term data to show that the vaccines "were going to prevent people from actually getting the infection and therefore being able to pass it on."

Yet, the huge effort by political leaders, backed by mainstream media, to convince tens of millions of Americans to get vaccinated, accelerates.

In just one of many examples of selling fear to get people on line to get injected, on 30 December, *The New York Times* featured this front-page headline story:

"He was Hospitalized for COVID-19. Then hospitalized Again. And Again."

The subtitle read: "Significant numbers of coronavirus patients experience long-term symptoms that send them back to the hospital, taxing an already overburdened health system."

The article goes on to single out a rare circumstance where a person infected with COVID-19 had to re-enter the hospital on multiple occasions due to an inability to fight off the virus. Included are the melodramatic lines:

> "The routine things in Chris Long's life used to include biking 30 miles three times a week and taking courses toward a Ph.D. in eight-week sessions. But since getting sick with the coronavirus, Mr. Long, 54, has fallen into a distressing new cycle – one that so far has landed him in the hospital seven times. 'This will never go away,' he said, describing his worse fear. 'This will be my going-forward for the foreseeable future.'"

Given the front-page status of this article, was *The New York Times* claim that "significant numbers of coronavirus patients experience long-term symptoms" requiring multiple trips "back to the hospital," thereby "taxing an already overburdened health system," prove to have any validity?

No.

According to statista.com, for every 100,000 people in Mr. Long's age group (50-64), about 2.7 percent require hospitalization.

As for those requiring multiple visits to the hospital after being infected, the *Times* article cites CDC data showing that of 106,543 coronavirus patients initially hospitalized between March and July, “1.6 percent of patients had to be readmitted more than once.”

So, of the less than 3 percent in Mr. Long’s age group that require even one hospital visit, only 1.6 percent of those, on average, needed to be re-admitted more than once. Yet the *Times* article refers to this minute percentage as “significant numbers.”

TRENDPOST: *When The New York Times writes that the spread of the virus is “taxing the already overburdened health system,” it, along with virtually all mainstream media, continues to ignore the main reason so many Americans, living in the wealthiest nation on Earth, are suffering from the virus more than any other country.*

The data proves the large majority of unhealthy Americans are the ones significantly more vulnerable to COVID.

*As reported consistently in the **Trends Journal**, the junk-food, chemically infused, sugar-addicted diet of most Americans has led to some 70 percent of the people being significantly overweight, 42 percent obese, over 30 million have type 2 diabetes, and some 30 million with chronic heart disease and respiratory ailments.*

According to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States. About 655,000 Americans die from heart disease each year – that’s one in every four deaths.

As for lung disease, the American Lung Association states that nearly 37 million Americans live with a chronic lung disease such as asthma and COPD, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

FEEL-GOOD MEDIA COVERAGE: SHOOT ME UP

Recent polling has shown that Americans are becoming more comfortable with the idea of getting inoculated with the COVID vaccine.

The Kaiser Family Foundation released a poll a few weeks ago that showed 71 percent of respondents in late November and early December said they would take the shots for inoculation. That number was an increase from August when 63 percent of those polled said they would be willing to get jabbed.

Rupali J. Limaye, an expert on vaccine behavior at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told *The New York Times* that one reason Americans may have had a change of heart was their succumbing to overall coronavirus fatigue. They want to return to their pre-outbreak lives. The report also pointed to “a barrage of feel-good media coverage” in regard to the vaccine and how it is administered, including the “rapt attention given to leading scientists and politicians when they get jabbed.”

The *Times* reported it spoke to several dozen individuals who were vaccinated about their experiences the next day, and the report said the reactions varied widely. Some felt completely normal while others complained of chills and brain fogs.

The report pointed out the Pfizer inoculation uses new genetic technology that has never been used before in a vaccine approved for public use. The report said doctors have noticed the vaccines are producing an increase in reactions when compared to other vaccines.

“Face Diapers”

Beyond growing faith in getting vaccinated, the *Times* reported that 75 percent of Americans wear masks when they leave their homes.

Demographics seem to play a role in the level of interest an individual has in getting vaccinated, the report said. It also said Blacks are the most skeptical racial group along with people between the ages of 30-49.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that doctors recommend those who have already been infected with the virus should also get vaccinated because there are still so many uncertainties and scientists still "don't know how durable natural immunity is."

And while the CDC reports the virus' reinfection within the first 90 days after infection is rare, they said no one knows how long natural immunity lasts.

"There's still a lot of unknowns," Vineet Menachery, an assistant professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Texas Medical Branch, told the *Journal*. "The biggest thing we'll need is time."

TOP TREND FOR 2021: *"ANTI-VAX, ANTI-TAX."*

In our 15 December ***Trends Journal****, we warned that clashes between governments demanding mass vaccinations and those opposing them will rage across much of the world.*

In November, we reported that the Ad Council, the nonprofit advertising group, was planning to announce its initiative to help assuage the fears that many Americans have about taking the vaccine to help prevent the virus' spread.

"Frankly, this is the biggest public health crisis we've ever faced, and we don't have time to waste," Lisa Sherman, the Ad Council's chief executive said, according to The New York Times. "We're working in advance so that once those vaccines are proven to be safe and approved by all the right people, we're ready to go."

Among many in Western nations, there will be strong political forces forming new political parties to counter ruling establishments that impose rules and regulations in violation of Constitutions and the Bill of Rights.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS: COMPLETE POLICY FAILURES

A senior researcher at the American Institute for Economic Research (AIE), Phil Magness, reviewed the past year of lockdowns, false claims, and failed government policies in dealing with the spread of COVID.

He came up with a number of prime examples of policy reversals and vast inconsistencies, which we follow up with confirmed data:

24 January 2020: "Anthony Fauci says lockdowns are not possible in the United States."

As the virus was first being talked about, Dr. Anthony Fauci, whom the media would anoint as the leading U.S. expert on infectious diseases, commented that the strict lockdown in Wuhan, China, where the coronavirus first appeared, would never be accepted in the United States.

As quoted on *CNN*, Dr. Fauci stated,

> "I can't imagine shutting down New York or Los Angeles, but the judgement on the part of the Chinese health authorities is that given the fact that it's spreading throughout the provinces, it's their judgement that this is something that in fact is going to help in containing it. Whether or not it does or does not is really open to question because historically when you shut things down it doesn't have a major effect."

February-March 2020: "U.S. government and WHO officials advise against mask use."

On 29 February, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams publicly discouraged citizens from wearing masks.

On 30 March, Dr. Mike Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO, stated at a press briefing,

> "There is no specific evidence to suggest that the wearing of masks by the mass population has any potential benefit. In fact, there's some evidence to suggest the opposite in the misuse of wearing a mask properly or fitting it properly."

Soon after, on 7 April, *Newsweek* published the article, "Surgical and Cotton Face Masks Ineffective at Blocking SARS-CoV-2 Particles When COVID-19 Patients Cough, Study Finds." (The study was published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.)

20 March 2020: "Ferguson predicts a 'best case' U.S. scenario of 1.1 million deaths."

Neil Ferguson had a track record of exaggerated death tolls for a number of diseases before COVID-19. But as a lead researcher for an Imperial College report on 16 March that predicted up to 500,000 deaths from the virus in the U.K. and up to two million in the U.S., he was a major influence on both countries' decision to impose extended lockdowns.

Note: in a subsequent interview, Ferguson predicted the number of U.S. COVID deaths would be just over one million.

16 March 2020: "Two weeks to flatten the curve."

In mid-March, the White House COVID task force aggressively promoted the need for a two-week lockdown, which would keep hospitals from being overwhelmed with suffering patients. In a media interview, Department of Homeland Security advisor Tom Bossert put out the dire warning that unless the country locked down, "We are ten days away from the hospitals getting creamed."

As the **Trends Journal** reported at the time, just a few weeks after Bossert's warning about hospitals "getting creamed," on 6 April, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo requested a U.S. naval hospital ship be provided, and he had the massive Javits Convention Center converted into a makeshift hospital to deal with the anticipated surge of COVID patients.

As it turned out, the hospital ship handled only 182 patients before departing, and the Javits Center remained mostly empty.

This didn’t stop Governor Cuomo from forcing recovering COVID patients to leave hospitals and check into nursing homes to make room for what he wrongly claimed would be a dire need for more hospital beds. His edict proved disastrous: within two months, New York reported over 5,000 deaths from COVID-19 in elder care facilities.

Pulitzer Award-winning journalist Michael Goodwin wrote at the time,

> “Nursing home executives, meanwhile, complain privately that Cuomo should’ve known his mandate would be a killer, but they were never consulted and got no notice before being swamped with infected patients. As one owner put it, longtime residents began ‘dropping like flies’ soon afterward. The same executives will not go public with their complaints because they fear Cuomo will punish them with fines and take their licenses.”

Note: Phillip Magness points out that despite Cuomo’s bungled policies causing a year-end mortality rate of close to 2,000 deaths per million, while cheered on as a national hero, not only does New York have a higher virus death rate than any other state, it ranks worse than any other country in the world.

31 July 2020: “Anthony Fauci credits lockdowns for beating the virus in Europe.”

Testifying before a congressional subcommittee on 31 July, Dr. Anthony Fauci stated that the stricter lockdowns in Europe were the main reason it was experiencing lower rates of fatality from the coronavirus:

> “If you look at what happened in Europe, when they shut down or locked down or went to shelter in place – however you want to describe it – they really did it to the tune of about 95% plus of the (European) countries did that. When you actually look at what we did, even though we shut down, even though it created a great deal of difficulty, we really functionally shut down only about 50% in the sense of the totality of the country.”

But on 10 August, the American Economic Institute published “Fact-Checking Fauci,” which included:

> “There are several immediate problems with Fauci’s arguments, including the fact that COVID cases are showing clear signs of a summer resurgence in the same European countries that allegedly tamed the virus through harsh lockdowns in the spring. The American news media however has seized on

> Fauci's narrative, and used it to call for renewed lockdowns. *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* both editorialized in favor of a second stricter wave of nationwide lockdowns lasting until October – this despite there being no clear evidence that lockdowns actually work at taming the virus."

As Phillip Magness points out in the current AIE exposé, Fauci's praising Europe's strict lockdowns as successful strategy "collapsed in the early fall when almost all of the lockdown countries in Europe experienced severe second waves – just like the locked down regions of the United States."

For a complete list of the "Twelve Times the Lockdowners Were Wrong," the full article, click here.

GOVERNOR AFRAID OF PROTESTERS CANCELS INAUGURATION CEREMONY

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu canceled his outdoor inauguration ceremony this Thursday because protesters against the lockdowns have been demonstrating in front of his home.

His office said in a statement that these protesters have become bolder and are beginning to target his family and trespass onto his private property. Sununu said that an outdoor ceremony "brings too much risk."

The protests outside his home started in late November, shortly after he ordered that face masks must be worn in public at all times when social distancing is not possible.

Described as candlelight vigils, nine summonses have been issued, and one arrest has been reported. *The Associated Press* spoke to Skylar Bennett, who said he will challenge his arrest on a new anti-picketing ordinance. He said the new ordinance was clearly designed to "benefit King Sununu."

TRENDPOST: *In the United Soviet States of Amerika, as evidenced by peaceful protestors being issued summonses and being arrested, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are prohibited. The demonstrators said the reason they were protesting outside the governor's home is because the statehouse is closed, and they have nowhere else to air their grievances to public officials.*

As we have continually noted, politicians, who get taxpayers money and do not have to worry about losing their businesses or jobs or being unable to pay rent/mortgages, taxes, health care, etc., boldly issue draconian COVID mandates that don't affect their income stream.

TRENDPOST: *As the late, great comedian George Carlin said, "It's one big club and you ain't in it."*

The guy playing Governor of New Hampshire is the son of John Sununu who was former New Hampshire Governor and White House Chief of Staff under George H. Bush. And his younger brother John E. Sununu was a former Congressman and Senator.

Again, all these little boys born with silver spoons in their mouths are, across the globe, telling the Little People of Slavelandia what to do, how to do it, and when to do what they are told. As evidenced by their getting elected and how the masses obey them and have their money stolen from them in the name of taxes...
while politicians campaign selling the line they are "public servants," as the hard reality proves, We the People are their "servants."

NYC: BUSINESSES DOWN, KILLINGS UP IN 2020

As we have been reporting, indoor dining in New York City's restaurants is outlawed; the theater district is locked down; business occupancy rates are around 15 percent; commercial/rental real estate prices are going down; and Times Square, as evidenced by the banning of revelers to celebrate New Year's Eve, is dead. Nearly three-and-a-half million people left New York City this year according to Unacast. Businesses are going bust; food lines are growing.

As Gerald Celente had warned back in March when politicians imposed draconian COVID War rules, "When people lose everything and have nothing left to lose, they lose it."

The city had a total of 447 killings in 2020, up 41 percent by time the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve. The number of those shot throughout the City "more than doubled last year's total," the report said.

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said there has been a confluence of issues that have contributed to the violent year. There have been anti-police protests in major cities across the U.S. after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody and budget constraints. He said he believes the police department is "definitely coming out of a dark period."

Confirming what we had long forecast, Samuel Walker, a policing expert at the University of Nebraska, told the *AP* that the coronavirus had a devastating impact on "society in low-income communities, and it just adds to the social disorganization that exists."

Minority residents in the City were hit hardest by the increase in shootings. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that data provided by the NYPD showed from

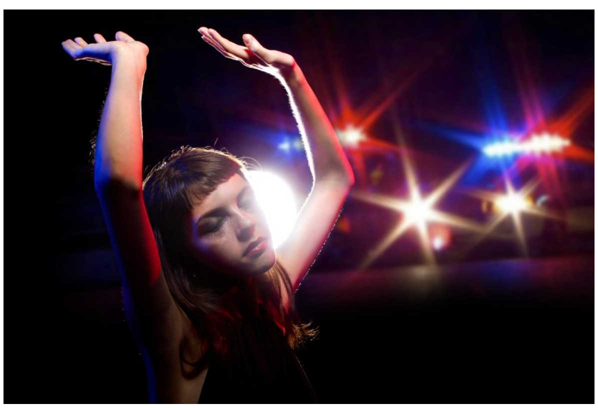
January to October 1,440 of the 1,495 shooting victims (96 percent) involved either Black or Hispanic victims.

The Daily Mail reported that the City recorded its first homicide of 2021 after a person was shot and killed in a triple shooting at a Queens hotel one hour into the new year. Between midnight on New Year's Eve and mid-morning New Year's Day, at least seven people were shot throughout Manhattan.

TRENDPOST: *New York City is not the only major city to see historic levels of violent crimes during the coronavirus outbreak. Chicago experienced its second deadliest year in two decades.*

Between January and October 2020, there was a 29 percent jump in homicides across the U.S., according to the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice. The economic impact in the low-income community will not improve anytime soon and these areas will become more desperate in the months to come.

COVID COP PARTY BASHERS



The New York City sheriff said Saturday that three major parties were broken up across the city on New Year's Eve for violating COVID-19 restrictions, which ban indoor dining.

Eater reported that since March 2020, these restrictions have led to more than 1,000 restaurants permanently closing.

Times Square was essentially a wasteland on New Year's Eve. But that didn't stop young revelers across the City from celebrating in bars and apartments. One of the largest parties included an event at the Maspeth Bar Lounge in Queens that attracted 300 partygoers, the sheriff's office said.

The Gothamist reported that deputies raided the establishment at about 2:15 AM and found many of the revelers singing karaoke, dancing, and drinking booze. *The New York Times* reported that deputies raided the three parties and, in most cases, the partiers were simply escorted out. The big punishment was directed at those who organized the events, some of whom face a $15,000 fine.

While "We the Little People of Slavelandia" were locked down, prohibited to take to the streets to celebrate, lockdown Mayor Bill de Blasio took center stage in Times Square at the "elites" private party and was dancing with his wife, Chirlane McCray.

COVID Cops in Los Angeles busted over a dozen New Year's Eve parties across the city and county, arresting some 100 partygoers.

Worldwide

Beyond New York, young people in Europe defied lockdown rules, partying to celebrate the New Year.

Authorities in the small French village of Lieuron, in the country's northwestern region, responded to a party in a warehouse on New Year's Eve that drew about 2,500 revelers.

The Washington Post reported that authorities seized sound equipment and generators during the sweep. Seven were sent to jail for ringing in the New Year and 800 were booked for breaking lockdown rules.

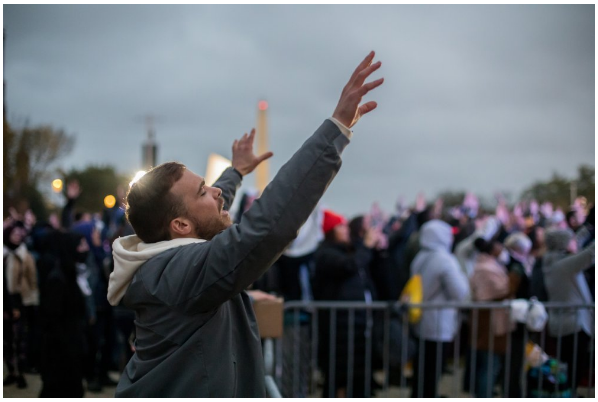
In the U.K., COVID Cops arrested three people after breaking up a New Year's Eve party being held in a 500-year-old church in East Horndon that was attended by a few hundred people,

TOP TREND FOR 2021: *"SPEAKEASIES."*

As forecast, the "Speakeasy" trend has begun.

Younger generations are sneaking out and going underground to clubs and venues to let loose and have a good time. As the "Speakeasy" trend accelerates dramatically this coming year, it will provide numerous opportunities for OnTrendpreneurs® to create new night club scenes, sounds, and styles in the upcoming "Roaring '21s."

CHRISTIAN SINGER CRITICIZED FOR SINGING IN PUBLIC



Sean Feucht, the Christian singer who has stood up against COVID-19 restrictions on places of worship, was criticized last week after he held a parking lot concert in Southern California that drew up to 2,5000 attendees who were standing shoulder-to-shoulder with hardly a face mask to be seen.

The concert occurred last Thursday night in the parking lot of Higher Vision Church, in Valencia, a neighborhood in Los Angeles county. The event was a New Year's Eve celebration, but it was also meant to make a statement about mask-wearing and the government crackdown on places of worship during the coronavirus outbreak.

"The lost need Jesus and we must boldly preach him," Feucht tweeted after the event. "No backing down!!!"

Church leaders in Southern California have lashed out against the state's ruling on services during the outbreak. *ABC 7* reported that, at one point, religious services were completely prohibited for 99.1 percent of Californians. These leaders said churches were unfairly targeted because, at the same time these buildings were closed, big box stores and shopping malls were allowed to operate with capacity limits.

Videos emerging from the concert showed attendees standing next to each other and signing along with Feucht. The singer posted one video on social media and wrote, "I refuse to allow a virus with a 99% survival rate keep me from plundering hell to populate heaven!!!"

Feucht is behind "Let Us Worship" rallies across the U.S. that focus on religious liberty.

TRENDPOST: *To date, Los Angeles county, with 10.1 million people, has recorded 10,700 deaths or one tenth of 1 percent of the population. Yet, despite this miniscule percentage, which is NEVER reported by the mainstream media, politicians have imposed draconian lockdown rules that have destroyed thousands of businesses and devasted hundreds of thousands of lives in the county.*

AUSTRALIA'S PREMIER CRACKING DOWN

Gladys Berejiklian, the premier of New South Wales (NSW), said Sunday that mask-wearing will be mandatory after eight new COVID cases were recorded in Sydney's western region.

The Guardian reported that 2,000 people were told to isolate in the state with a population of 7.5 million. Four of the new cases live in the same household, the report said. Berejiklian's mask mandate will be enforced by police who will issue fines to those in violation. She said she hopes the drastic measures will protect the local economy. The fines will be $200 per offense and will begin tomorrow.

People living in the Berala area will be fined $1,000 if they attend this week's Sydney Test cricket match.

Victoria, which has three new cases, closed its border with NSW shortly after the infections were announced. The Australian Capital Territory said it will not allow anyone from the NSW vicinity to enter without a valid pass, the report said. *The Guardian* reported that up to 60,000 people rushed the border last weekend before it closed.

TRENDPOST: *We note these draconian measures being imposed by the government and reported by the media to illustrate the extent and damage of the mandates on businesses, lives, and livelihoods despite the fact that the virus has caused relatively minor deaths in the population.*

To date, in all of Australia, a nation of 25 million, the country has recorded 909 deaths since the virus broke out in March. That equals a death rate of 0.003636 percent.

As for NSW, 54 deaths out of a population of 7.5m = 0.00072 percent. Over the course of ten months, with an average of 5.4 deaths a month, it would be 0.000072 percent a month.

These basic facts are not reported by the media, and the government fails to provide a scientific rationale to lock down society.

In addition, while the majority of coronavirus deaths were people aged 70 years and over, according to the Australian Government Department of Health, 687 of the 909 deaths were people over 80 years old.

TOP TREND FOR 2021: *"YOUTH REVOLUTION."*

To young people, rightfully so, the virus is an old people's sickness, not theirs. As more young people struggle to find jobs, pay for education, unable to move from their parent's home, not allowed to go out and play... they will rebel, starting and joining anti-establishment movements, political parties, and creating their own sounds and styles.

TRENDPOST: *This past October, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian was caught having a five-year, secret love affair with MP Daryl Maguire while he was married. Maguire was forced to resign in 2018 after being accused of misusing his public office to get rich doing property deals in western Sydney. Berejiklian survived a no-confidence vote by one vote.*

We note this because these are the "highly ethical" people ruling nations and telling the peasants of Slavelandia what to do.

ONTARIO FINANCE MINISTER: ANOTHER POLITICAL JOKER

Ontario's Finance Minister Rod Phillips stepped down last week after he was caught vacationing in St. Bart's while health officials in his province told citizens to avoid travel due to the risk of spreading the coronavirus. Ontario had been placed on lockdown.

Aside from the embarrassment of being caught, according to *Newsweek,* Phillips tried to cover up the trip.

In an effort to lie to the peasants of Slavelandia, Phillips pre-scheduled social media posts, sipping eggnog to give the impression he was nestled up in the province on the week leading up to the Christmas holiday and not on a sandy beach in the tropics.

Doug Ford, the province's premier, said he was unaware of Phillips' travel plans and issued a statement last Thursday that said he accepted his resignation.

"At a time when the people of Ontario have sacrificed so much, today's resignation is a demonstration that our government takes seriously our obligation to hold ourselves to a higher standard," he said.

In a statement confirming his resignation, Phillips said, "Travelling over the holidays was the wrong decision, and I once again offer my unreserved apology."

TRENDPOST: *We continue to note how, after politicians are caught lying, cheating, stealing, etc., they blow out their "apology." They apologize for nothing. Their only true sorrow is getting caught, yet they continue to play the apology game, which the media sells and most of the public buy.*

Who's Lying?

Andrea Horwath, Ontario's new Democratic Party leader, said in a statement, "It's not believable that a senior member of cabinet didn't tell the premier's office he was leaving the country for weeks during the height of a global emergency. If he didn't, that in itself would be enough reason to demote him."

Lying Squad

Politicians in the U.S. have also faced public backlash for disregarding their own public guidelines during the virus outbreak. In July, conservatives blasted members of Congress who attended John Lewis' funeral in Georgia. They pointed out that any travel to the Peach State would require House members to self-quarantine for 14 days upon their return to Washington, D.C.

A spokesman from Mayor Muriel Bowser's office told *JustTheNews.com* that "government activity is essential, and the Capitol of the United States is exempt from the mayor's office."

Chicago's Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who ordered lockdowns for the city, was spotted in the middle of a crowd in November celebrating Joe Biden's apparent presidential victory. She responded to criticism by saying, "There are times when we actually do need to have relief and come together, and I felt like that was one of those times. That crowd was gathered whether I was there or not."

Perhaps the most famous incident came when California Governor Gavin Newsom was spotted at a posh restaurant in Napa Valley celebrating a birthday party and skirting his own guidelines. Newsom has been one of the most outspoken critics of those breaking social-distancing orders. He was seen at a large table with other guests without wearing a mask.

Jan Pedrini, a volunteer who was getting signatures for Newsom's recall last week, told the station, "Kids should be in school and they're not except for his kids because they go to a private school. He's doing things like he says we can't do like going to the French Laundry. We can't go to a restaurant, but he can."

San Francisco Mayor London Breed admitted she joined seven others to celebrate the birthday of Gorretti Lo Lui, described in reports as a prominent socialite. Mayor Breed attended the party at the French Laundry – the same restaurant that attracted Newsom.

Three days after Breed returned to the city from Napa Valley, she banned all indoor dining in San Francisco. And now, the lockdown is extended “indefinitely,” and activities including outdoor dining will remain forbidden.

More Phonies

Austin, Texas mayor Steve Adler joined the long list of politicians who have been called out for hypocrisy during the virus outbreak. While on vacation in Mexico, he filmed a video telling his constituents why they must obey his COVID orders, urging them to stay home.

The New York Times reported that Alder flew on a private jet to Mexico and then told his constituents, “We need you to, you know, stay home if you can.”

Also, in December, Sheila Kuehl, the Los Angeles County supervisor, was called out for hypocrisy after she was caught dining outside at an Italian restaurant in Santa Monica just hours after voting to close outdoor dining in the city.

TRENDPOST: *We note these hypocrisies to illustrate the true nature of the political ruling class of Liars, Cowards, Freaks, and Fools who do as they wish while ordering plantation workers of the world to do what they are told.*

COVID-19 VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS: EUROPEANS WARY

Reports of severe allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines have played a role in driving more Europeans to be hesitant about lining up to be inoculated for the virus.

The U.S.’s CDC said some of those who have taken the vaccine have had “severe allergic reactions” that required medical intervention. The treatment has ranged from hospitalization to treatment with epinephrine. The U.K.’s NHS warned that those with a history of allergic reactions should not take the vaccine.

The NHS reported two staffers suffered from allergic reactions last week. They suffered from a skin rash, breathlessness, or a drop in blood pressure, the health body said. One of the main concerns among Europeans is that scientists have yet to pinpoint the cause of such episodes.

Yesterday, it was reported that Sonia Azevedo, 41, a mother of two who worked as a surgical assistant at the Instituto Portugues de Oncologia, an oncology hospital in Portugal, died the day after she received first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Reuters reported that the European Union has signed contracts with Pfizer and BioNTech and other drug makers and hopes to inoculate more than two billion people by next year.

The report said the French and Polish have expressed concern over the vaccine. Fewer than 40 percent of those in Poland said they intend to take the shot. A *Reuters* report found that only 50 percent of the medical staff at a hospital in Warsaw signed up to get the vaccine.

An IPSOS poll from November showed that 54 percent of French, 64 percent of Italians, 79 percent of Britons, and 87 percent of Chinese would be willing to get the vaccine, according to the report.

Propaganda Machine

As reported in the *Financial Times*, France is ramping up an "inoculation campaign" to sell its vaccine-skeptical population on getting jabbed.

To date, just 350 have been vaccinated in France compared to the one million shot up in the U.K. and nearly 250,000 in Germany.

Despite approximately one in three French citizens disagreeing that vaccines are safe, which, according to the Gallup poll, is the highest percentage in the 140 countries surveyed, the government expects to inject 20 million citizens by midyear.

TRENDPOST: *Health officials have said that 70 to about 85 percent of the population would have to have antibodies in order to achieve herd immunity.*

Dr. Anthony Fauci, touted by the Presstitutes as America's top disease expert, said if the number is achieved, the county will "really get back to some strong semblance of normality."

TRENDPOST: *As we have noted, if the vaccine is reliable, then those choosing to get vaccinated are safe from the virus.*

Thus, why force those who do not believe in the vaccine to get vaccinated, since those who got the shot are said to be safe?

Similarly, if those who believe wearing a mask makes them safe, why force those who don't want to wear masks to wear one, since those wearing them believe they are safe?

These points are ignored by the mainstream media, which instead propagandize that for the good of all, all must comply.

SWEEPING DEMOCRACY UNDER THE RUG

As reported in this issue on the failure of lockdowns in numerous countries (see "COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS: COMPLETE POLICY FAILURES"), the state of New York, under Governor Andrew Cuomo, has the worst fatality rate from COVID not only of any other U.S. state, but of any other country.

Yet, it is now revealed that the New York State assembly has submitted a bill that would give the state government the power to force citizens infected or even suspected of having being infected into detention centers.

As reported on a number of websites, the proposed legislation would "grant sweeping arrest powers to the governor of New York."

The proposed bill is posted on the official web site of the New York State Senate and reads, "Assembly Bill A416, 2021-2022 Legislative Session, Relates to the removal of cases, contacts and carriers of communicable diseases who are potentially dangerous to the public health."

The bill was submitted by Democratic assemblyman N. Nick Perry.

According to *Post Online Media*, reporting last Saturday, "The law apparently allows the governor or health official to unilaterally approve such detentions, but a court order is required within 60 days of confinement, and judicial review is also required if the individual is still in detention after 90 days… the bill also allows the governor or relevant health authorities to require people deemed potential health risks to submit to medical examinations."

The bill specifically states the power of the state government to enforce a "prescribed course of treatment, preventative medication or vaccination."

It's important to note that this proposed law never actually refers to the coronavirus, but could apply to any general medical emergency as perceived by the governor.

TRENDPOST: *Interesting that a bill has been introduced into the New York State Assembly that advocates "detention centers" and "forced vaccinations," given that NY's Governor Andrew Cuomo recently referred to the newly distributed COVID-19 vaccines in totally warlike terminology.*

On 15 December, the governor, commenting on the new vaccines, stated, "I believe this is the weapon that will end the war… we have planes, trains, and automobiles moving this all over the state right now. We want to get it deployed, and we want to get it deployed quickly."

At a 6 December press conference, Cuomo declared, "COVID-19 is spreading, and it affects all New Yorkers, upstate and downstate. This is a war, and we continue to adapt to the enemy."

The governor added, "We know what works: wear a mask, avoid indoor gatherings, and socially distance, and the local governments must do enforcement. We will win this war, but it will take vigilance."

Governor Cuomo is backed by proposed Commander in Chief-elect Joe Biden, who stated on 25 November, "I know the country has grown weary of the fight. We need to remember we're at war with the virus."

DANISH STUDY: MASKS OFFER VERY LIMITED PROTECTION

We have reported on this before in the **Trends Journal** and in our **Trends in The News** broadcasts, and we will do it again, since Presstitutes and politicians ignore the facts and continually promote the Mask-ueraded.

A study regarding the efficacy of wearing masks to slow the spread of the coronavirus that was recently conducted in Denmark was published on 18 November. Half of the volunteers wore masks regularly, while the other half didn't.

After one month, the difference in infection rates between those regularly wearing masks (1.8 percent) was only 0.3 percent less than those who never put on a mask (2.1 percent).

According to the authors of the study, conducted by the Copenhagen University Hospital, "The study does not confirm the expected halving of the risk of infection for people wearing face masks."

As *Reuters* reported in its article revealing the results of the Danish study, "The findings are consistent with previous research. Health experts have long said a mask provides only limited protection for the person wearing it."

Journalist Alex Berenson, former *New York Times* reporter who has been researching a number of COVID-19 claims by mainstream media, stated the Danish study was impressive given it included thousands of participants. Mr. Berenson said it "essentially showed that wearing masks does not protect the wearer at all from the coronavirus… It was a very, very well- designed study. Frankly, if a drug company had a drug in trials that had this trial result, they would discontinue the drug. There is just no evidence that masks protect the wearer."

While most governments and political leaders strongly advocate mandatory mask wearing, the Danish study confirms what a Japanese study revealed last July. Research conducted by Kazunari Onishi, associate professor at St. Luke's International University in Tokyo, showed that with the typical cloth mask worn by the majority of the Japanese public there was "a 100-percent rate in terms of airborne particles penetrating the fabric and through the gap between masks and faces, substantially raising the risk of infection."

Hide the Truth

Again, as reported in the **Trends Journal** for months, the vast majority of mainstream media either ignore or bury deep into articles any legitimate study showing the ineffectiveness of masks in preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

A glaring example is the *New York Times* article from 6 June: "Is the Secret to Japan's Virus Success Right in Front of Its Face?" The subtitle read, "In America, masks have become a weapon in the culture wars. In Japan, wearing one is no big deal, and deaths have stayed low."

Then, 23 paragraphs into the article, they printed the one line: "The scientific evidence on whether a mask protects the wearer from infection is mixed."

The word "mixed" was in the form of a link that clicked to a study in the medical journal medRxiv, co-founded by Yale University and the British Medical Journal, which noted, "Where specific information was available, most studies reported… wearing a facemask may very slightly reduce the odds of developing respiratory symptoms, by around 6%."

While acknowledging "there is enough evidence to support the use of facemasks for short periods of time by particularly vulnerable individuals when in transient higher risk situations," the study could only confirm that for the general public, "We would conclude that wearing facemasks can be very slightly protective against primary infection from casual community contact."

TRENDPOST: *Yes, the masks are, as research concludes, "very slightly protective," yet billions of people across the globe are being forced to wear them. Absent* *from the media are the studies that detail the health risks of mask wearing... both physically and mentally.*

COVID CASES UP, NATIONS LOCKING DOWN

FRANCE. To ring in the New Year, French Interior Gérald Darmanin, the country's "top cop" – who was questioned last month by judges over rape charges – *deployed 132,000 police to limit New Year's Eve celebrations.*

The *Financial Times* reported the French government extended the nightly curfew in 15 departments in the east and south-east back from 8 PM to 6 PM, while prompting politicians in those zones to impose stricter measures.

The government also indefinitely extended the closing of museums and cinemas and forced restaurants and bars to stay closed.

U.K. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Sunday that the U.K. is dealing with a surge in COVID infections, and he may have to order "tougher measures" in the coming weeks to get the virus under control.

Johnson told the *BBC* in an interview that the measures might lead to school closures and the complete ban of any household mixing. The report said England is under a "tier system," and most of the country is at the highest level. Other areas like Sussex and Cambridge will also soon follow those guidelines.

Britain has recorded 82,600 deaths since the beginning of the outbreak. As with the global data, the elderly are the prime victims of the disease. According to the Office for National Statistics analyses of the virus, the average age of those who have died from COVID is above 80, with more than nine in ten of the deaths among those over 65 years old.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labor Party, said Johnson needs to act quickly. “We can’t allow the prime minister to use up the next two or three weeks and then bring in national lockdown which is inevitable.”

An anti-lockdown protest broke out at London’s Hyde Park last weekend, which resulted in 17 arrests, according to *The Evening Standard.* One of the arrests included Piers Corbyn, the brother of the former Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

On Monday, Prime Minister Johnson announced a national lockdown ordering the people to stay at home until mid-February. Schools and non-essential businesses were shut across the country, and people are prohibited to leave their homes unless it is necessary.

TREND FORECAST: *The longer the lockdowns last, the greater the protests will grow. As Gerald Celente has long said, “When people lose everything and have nothing left to lose, they lose it.” And lose it they are: businesses, lives, and livelihoods are being destroyed by lockdown rules that defy science.*

Indeed, as data proves in New York State, the virus infection rate from restaurants is a measly 1.43 percent, yet the New York City establishments, as with those across the globe, have been forced to close down.

ITALY. Before the Christmas holiday, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told the country the virus outbreak forced him to lock down bars and restaurants from Christmas Eve to 6 January, according to *The New York Times.*

An analysis of the individuals who died after contracting the virus revealed that the vast majority of deaths occurred among the elderly.

Reports show that some 95 percent were over the age of 60. According to *statista.com*, “Of the 63.5 thousand coronavirus deaths subject of this study, more than 85 percent were patients aged 70 years and older. Among that demographic most of the deaths involved citizens over 80 years old who had pre-existing conditions.”

With 23 percent of its population 65 or older, Italy has the oldest population in Europe and puts it just behind Japan for the world’s oldest country.

SPAIN. Salvador Illa, Spain's health minister, announced last week Madrid will form a registry that lists residents who refuse to take a coronavirus vaccine as the country re-entered the category of "extreme risk" for infection.

"What we will have is a registry that will also be shared with our European partners… of those who have been offered it and rejected it.

The Guardian reported that the vaccine is optional in the country and pointed out there is some skepticism among residents to take the vaccine. Only 40.5 percent said they would be willing to be vaccinated immediately.

GERMANY. Chancellor Angela Merkel is preparing to meet with over a dozen state premiers today to discuss Berlin's response to the surge in COVID cases that have resulted in a record number of daily deaths last week, according to a report in *Deutsche Welle.*

The paper reported it is expected these officials will urge Merkel to implement new lockdown measures to combat the virus' spread.

"The lockdown must be extended until the end of January," Markus Söder, the Bavarian State premier, said in an interview. "Premature easing would set us far back."

TRENDPOST: *To date, the country of 84 million had a total of 35,632 deaths since the outbreak's onset. As we have reported, this compares to New York State, with a population of 19.5 million, where 38,561 people died from the virus.*

Yet, despite having a population a quarter the size of Germany's and registering 3,000 more virus deaths, New York's Governor Cuomo is saluted by the media as a champion in winning the COVID War.

As we have reported, as with much of the world, those dying from the virus are "grandparents" and those suffering from 2.6 pre-existing chronic conditions.

The average age of a COVID victim in Germany, depending on the available data, ranges between 77 to 82 years old.

Therefore, rather than lock down the entire nation, destroying businesses, lives, and livelihoods, Germany, as with the rest of the world, should be advising those most at risk to take strict precautions.

TURKEY. Turks have been growing increasingly desperate as the lockdown orders have taken a heavy toll on the nation, with 25 percent of the country saying they might not be able to meet their basic needs.

Beyond the domestic economic devastation caused by the draconian measures, travel restrictions and curfews have crimped the country's important hospitality sector.

With over 46 million international tourists in 2019, according to the *OECD iLibrary*, some 7.7 percent of the nation's total employment is from tourism.

Battered by double-digit inflation, the Turkish lira is down more than 30 percent against the dollar this year. With the nation's foreign reserves badly depleted, Moody's Investor Service warns the nation faces a balance of payments crisis.

Ozgur Akbas, the owner of a tobacco shop in Istanbul, told *The New York Times* that many of his friends have been forced to close their shops. He said many have grown desperate and are on the "verge of suicide."

BELGIUM. At least 26 residents at a retirement home in Belgium died from COVID after it was revealed that a volunteer Santa Claus who visited the facility tested positive for the virus.

The Guardian reported that photographs emerged from the 6 December visit showing residents at the facility in Mol, which is near Antwerp, not wearing face masks during the visit. The report said most of the transmission came from the same source.

TRENDPOST: *While The Guardian did note that of Belgium's 11,066 COVID deaths, more than half were retirement home residents, as we have emphasized, the fact of who is dying and why are buried or ignored by the mainstream media.*

And, again, to young people, this is an old folk's disease. Thus, they want to break loose and have fun... and will break the laws to do so.

COVID COPS KILL HOUSE PARTY: SIX TOO MANY

A video emerged on social media last weekend that was widely criticized as an example of police aggression to fight the COVID War.

COVID Cops in Gatineau, Quebec, were informed by a neighbor about a house party on New Year's Eve. Police officers arrived at the home and said they found six individuals from six different households, which violates the province's COVID guidelines.

CBC News reported Gatineau police said the confrontation escalated after one of the responding officers was assaulted by a person inside the home. Police said charges will likely be announced.

Mathieu Tessier, one of the two occupants arrested, told *CBC News* it was the police who were the aggressors. He said an officer grabbed his mother and treated those inside the house "like animals, like criminals."

RT.com reported some social media users also took issue with the neighbor who had informed police about the party. One commenter wrote, "Tale as old as time: miserable people ratting on happy people aka misery loves company."

The police were also called out after eagle-eyed viewers noticed that some of the officers were not wearing face masks. The department said they didn't have time to put them on because "they were called as back up and due to the emergency."

TRENDPOST: *Canada, a nation of 38 million people, has registered 16,074 deaths since the virus broke out or 0.042 percent of the population.*

And who is dying from the virus in Canada? As with the rest of the world, mostly the elderly. According to the National Institute on Ageing, 70 percent of Canada's COVID deaths are attributed to long-term care homes.

As reported in the Wall Street Journal last week,

> *"An analysis published in November in the Journal of Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine looked at a dozen Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member countries and found the Covid-19 mortality rate among long-term care residents was more than 20 times higher than that among older people living outside such facilities."*

Yet, rather than developing strategies to assist those most at risk, Canada, as with most nations, punishes its people for minor infractions while locking down the entire nation, destroying businesses, lives, and livelihoods.

Indeed, the WSJ quoted Joseph Ibrahim, a professor focused on health law and aging at Monash University in Australia, who said, "Long-term care is forgotten, neglected, at the bottom of the list for almost every country, when you look at the data."

TRENDS IN GEOPOLITICS

INDIA'S MODI VS. FARMERS

We have been reporting since mid-November that hundreds of thousands of farmers began protesting on the outskirts of Delhi in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's push for deregulations they fear will sink them deeper into poverty.

Farmers have blocked major roads and burned their crops, contending that deregulation will lead to small farms becoming insolvent and eventually taken over by larger rivals.

More than half of India's 1.4 billion people are employed in agriculture, which accounts for 15 percent of India's $2.9-trillion economy.

Negotiations between Indian farmers and Prime Minister Modi have shown little progress since controversial agriculture laws were passed in September that they say essentially strips them of their state-backed protections and jeopardize their very existence.

"We've been suffering since 1947 [the country's independence]," Morha Singh, a wheat farmer, told *the Financial Times.* "The government has ignored us and our problems. We've cultivated the land and now they're trying to give it to corporates."

Al Jazeera reported that Modi held a public address last Friday to assuage farmers and talk about what he sees as success stories for farmers that occurred during his leadership. One included a guaranteed minimum income for small famers in the country. Modi said his opposition worked to spread the falsehood that these farmers would be exploited by larger corporations.

The agriculture industry used to provide a third of the country's GDP, but that output has dropped to about 15 percent.

Rahul Gandhi, the former Congress party president, tweeted that the country is experiencing an historic uprising: "The country is facing a situation like Champaran once again," Gandhi said. "Back then, collaborators supported the British company, now the friends of Modi are in cahoots. But every agitating farmer-worker is a satyagrahi, who will secure his rights."

TREND FORECAST: *India's economy was sinking for several consecutive quarters before the COVID War broke out. Its GDP is estimated to have fallen 15.7 percent over the last six months through September.*

Last January, with the Indian economy contracting, protests against the Modi government were escalating.

Also, back in January, we reported on the demonstrations spreading throughout India as millions of citizens continued the two months-long protests against the *passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act. Spearheaded by Mr. Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party, the Act grants citizenship to religious minorities – except Muslims – from neighboring countries.*

These demonstrations were suddenly halted when the Prime Minister locked down the entire nation in March in his fight to win the COVID War.

We forecast that as economic conditions continue to decline, demonstrations will escalate and India's military/police forces will violently clamp down on protesters. The military will try to stop the protests, but with hundreds of millions of Indians losing everything and with nothing left to lose, they will not back down until the government meets some of their demands.

As Gerald Celente notes, "When all else fails, they take you to war." Be it escalating skirmishes with neighboring Pakistan or China over ongoing border disputes or a wild card event... the farmers' protests will be instantly shut down should war break out.

CHINA 2021: WE'RE #1

Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* pointed to a document from Beijing, released in November, that said, "Patriotism is the most natural and simple emotion of the Chinese. We must insist on starting from when they are babies, focusing on consolidating the roots, concentrating on the soul."

The report said the younger Chinese generation is "fiercely patriotic." Since 2013, these children have been exposed to the campaign.

For many in the country, its economic growth and its effective management of the virus outbreak has been a source of national pride. A recent survey showed 90 percent of teenagers polled used terms like "lucky" and "satisfied" when asked about growing up in China, and fewer seem eager to move to a western country than in years past.

Part of the initiative included a centralization of ideas. Textbooks now need to be approved by authorities in Beijing.

The report said Beijing authorities also use short video clips and video games to sell their message. *The Journal* spoke to a graduate student from China's Inner Mongolia University who analyzed 541 Communist Youth League videos and found the videos geared to the very young depicted competing countries, such as the U.S., as silly cartoon animals.

The videos, which were released from 2018 to 2020, are considered a smashing success and garnered at least 100 million views on the country's video platform hosting site, Bilibili.

TOP TREND FOR 2021: *"CHINA 2021: THE CHINESE CENTURY"*

The 20th century was the American century – the 21st century will be the Chinese century. The business of China is business; the business of America is war. While the rest of the Western world is relocking down its economies, China, where the virus first broke out, is completely reopened. Of all the world's major nations whose gross domestic products will be in decline, China stands alone in having its GDP rising into positive territory.

E.U. TO CHINA: LET'S MAKE A DEAL... WITHOUT U.S.

As China's power and influence over the world's economy continues to grow, European leaders are willing to open markets with Beijing while claiming to maintain some degrees of caution and suspicion, as reported in last week's *Wall Street Journal.*

The report pointed to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in October showing global distrust of President Xi Jinping at an all-time high. Beijing's European critics blame the country's leadership for its slow response and transparency at the onset of the COVID outbreak, and see its crackdown in Hong Kong and intimidation campaign in Taiwan as troubling tendencies.

Beijing has blamed Western countries for perpetuating false accusations.

"China has become plank number one for the U.S. in our diplomatic conversations with Europeans," Wess Mitchell, the former U.S. assistant secretary of state for European Affairs, told the paper. "Our best ally in the effort to make China an issue is China's own behavior."

The South China Morning Post reported China's economic growth could reach 9 percent next year, and its economy could overtake the U.S. to become the world's largest by 2028. Beijing, however, does have some monetary issues.

"Even though China's exports remain resilient this year, it could face problems from poor global economic outlook and shrinking international trade. Debt growth and high interest rates are also risky combinations, adding to China's overall debt pressure," the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a think tank, said in a statement.

Still, China's economic growth has led to an investment deal with the E.U., which *The New York Times* called a "significant geopolitical victory for China." The deal still needs to be ratified by the European Parliament.

Jake Sullivan, President-elect Joe Biden's choice for national security advisor, warned about the pact in a Twitter post. He said the Biden administration "would welcome early consultations with our European partners on our concerns about China's economic practices."

The Financial Times reported the accord, seven years in the making, is an early challenge for the Biden administration that hoped to work with European allies to apply pressure on Beijing when it comes to issues like human rights and its penchant for stealing intellectual property. *The FT* spoke with a former Obama administration official who called Sullivan's tweet significant.

"Jake's tweet was very, very careful in the text but the message was unmistakable," the former official said. "Jake basically said, 'Hey, slow things down,' and that's not happening."

Thomas Wright, a senior fellow at the Bookings Institution, told *the FT* the E.U.'s leaderships move to agree to the deal is "unquestionably damaging" and "will have many justifiably asking if it's worth Biden's time placing a big bet on Europe."

HONG KONG PROTESTORS JAILED IN MAINLAND CHINA

Ten protesters from Hong Kong, whom Chinese officials say were captured attempting to flee the city, were sentenced to up to three years in a mainland China prison, according to a report last week in *the Financial Times.*

The ten were attempting to escape prosecution over their alleged involvement in last year's anti-government protests.

The judgment was handed down during a closed-door hearing and sparked international condemnation. The sentence was also seen as a warning to potential copycats. *The Washington Post* reported that the ten were part of the group called the "Hong Kong 12." (Two on board were minors and not charged.) The others, ranging in age from 16 to 33, were arrested in August. They were attempting to reach Taiwan by speedboat, the report said.

Tang Kai Yin, the 31-year-old who is said to be the organizer of the escape attempt, was sentenced to three years in prison and fined $3,000. The other sentences ranged from seven months to two years with slightly lower fines. The detainees were not allowed to speak freely with relatives and were appointed their legal representation, the report said.

The FT reported family members covered their identities during a press conference after the sentencing. One of their fathers said, "In the mainland, no matter it is one day or seven days, it is a wrongful conviction."

Ho-Fung, a professor of political economy at Johns Hopkins University, told *The Post*, "This episode will create an atmosphere of terror among dissidents and activists."

TREND FORECAST: *We have continually reported in the* ***Trends Journal*** *that Beijing could not quell the extensive Hong Kong protests that began in March 2019 and had well over a million citizens taking to the streets.*

The demonstrations were in reaction to the Fugitive Offenders legislation bill, which would have allowed China to extradite Hong Kong criminal suspects to the mainland.

As Gerald Celente had forecast when the virus first broke out in China last January, Beijing would use COVID-19 to achieve what they were unable to accomplish before the virus stuck Wuhan: lock down Hong Kong to stop the protests.

That has now been accomplished… along with Beijing's new national security law, the city is under the full dictate of the Chinese government.

MEXICO: CANNABIS LEGAL

Mexico is one step closer to legalizing marijuana, which would make the country the world's largest legal cannabis market, ostensibly put new pressure on drug cartels, and possibly influence larger economies like the U.S. to legalize the drug under federal law.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador vowed in 2018, when he was elected president, to put an end the country's drug war.

Mexico's Senate passed the bill in November, and it is expected to be made into law sometime in February. Marijuana has been legal in the country for medical purposes since 2017. The Senate voted on the bill after the country's Supreme Court ruled that marijuana prohibition was unconstitutional.

Foreign Policy reported Portugal was the first country to decriminalize illicit drugs back in 2001, and the country has seen success.

Oregon was the first state in the U.S. to decriminalize all drugs. The measure, which was promoted by a nonprofit supported by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, passed with 58 percent of the vote, *U.S. News & World Report said.* (It is still illegal to sell the drugs, but possession is no longer a criminal offense.)

TREND FORECAST: *As global economies go deeper into debt, more nations will legalize cannabis as a mean to generate tax revenue. Will legalizing cannabis put the drug cartels out of the pot business? Not if states and nations put high taxes on sales, since buyers will stay with the dealers who give them the best bang for their buck.*

ERDOGAN POWER GRAB OR LOSING POWER?

Human rights groups bristled at a newly passed law in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, that grants new government control over nongovernment organizations (NGOs), which critics say threaten any dissent in the country aimed at President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party.

Tarik Beyham, Director of Amnesty International in Turkey, told *the Financial Times* the legislation enables the interior ministry to use vague terrorism charges to cease these groups' activities, and it means these organizations could be shut down without an explanation and "without a chance for appeal."

"It raises the possibility that all rights groups may be abolished in Turkey," he said.

The new legislation is called, "Preventing Financing of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction." German outlet *Deutsche Welle* reported that the bill, passed in parliament on 7 December, would enable the interior ministry to replace board members of these associations and suspend all operations if there are terror charges.

The FT reported the government had cracked down on dissent in 2016, when over a half million people faced legal proceeding in a failed coup attempt. They noted that thousands of journalists, lawyers, and opposition protesters remain in prison. The *FT* pointed out that hundreds of NGOs in the country were also closed at the time.

"The definition of terrorism in this law is quite ambiguous, problematic and far from international standards. Many rights defenders have been charged under this law," Beyham told the *FT.*

"Human right groups are frequently exposed to terrorism accusations [and] this law relies on ambiguous definitions of terrorism to render associations dysfunctional," he concluded.

TREND FORECAST: *As Gerald Celente has said, "When all else fails, they take you to war." As we have detailed in other issues of the* ***Trends Journal****, Turkey's economy faces a "Greatest Depression" future.*

With economies across the globe failing, governments will divert the public's attention away from national issues by intensifying conflicts with countries they have, or will have, disputes with.

Thus, Turkey's involvement in the Caucuses, Libya, and Syria and with Greece are key trigger points with explosive potential that could destabilize the regions.

ETHIOPIAN WAR RAGES ON

We have been reporting on the escalating war in Ethiopia since it broke out in early November when its Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, launched an attack against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) after the region held its own election in September without the Ahmed's approval.

Last week, the *BBC* reported forces in Tigray launched rockets into Eritrea after accusing its neighbor of allowing the Ethiopian military to use an airport to carry out military operations.

Eritrean forces are accused of fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region despite assurances from Prime Minister Ahmed that outside troops are not in the country.

The New York Times reported last week that two dozen aid workers and other officials confirmed Eritrea's presence in the conflict and said these forces are fighting in coordination with Ethiopian troops.

"Abiy has invited a foreign country to fight against his own people," Awol Allo, a former Abiy supporter, told *The Times.* He said, "The implications are huge." Residents in the region have been "slaughtered like chicken," Tigrayan elders said, according to *The Guardian.*

They said corpses have been abandoned in fields and left to be "eaten by hyenas." The paper said that a communications blackout has essentially closed off the world from observing the horrors on the ground, which include looting and scorched-earth campaigns around refugee camps.

Wallelegn, a Tigrayan who worked in Shire during the onset of the war, told *The Guardian* that Eritrean forces have taken the lead in the conflict there.

"Their uniform is different and they are relatively old and skinny compared with the Ethiopian defense forces," he told the paper. "In the early days of their arrival to Shire they were looting, randomly shooting, mainly youngsters, and burning factories."

The Guardian report said thousands are believed to have been killed, and about 50,000 fled to Sudan. Villages have been flattened. The report said Ahmed and Isaias Afwerki, the Eritrean leader, share a common enemy in the TPLF.

A spokesman from the U.S. State Department told the Guardian the U.S. is aware of "credible reports of Eritrean military involvement in Tigray and view this as a grave development. We urge that any such troops be withdrawn immediately."

TREND FORECAST: *As we have reported, Ethiopia's economy had been steadily growing and was strong until the COVID War severely damaged it.*

The greater the tensions rise and the deeper the nation falls economically, the more people in this highly populated nation will seek refuge in safe-haven European nations. This will in turn boost populist political party movements throughout the Eurozone. These movements will gain strength as economic conditions and calls for self-sustainability increase.

TRENDS-EYE VIEW

USA: TOO FAT TO FIGHT

“Missions Readiness,” comprised of former military leaders, issued a warning last week that the youth in the U.S. is not fit enough – both physically and emotionally – to defend the country.

The Washington Times reported the Department of Defense found 71 percent of those considered to be young Americans are unable to serve in combat due to drug abuse, obesity, a poor education, or a criminal record.

“Without coordinated actions, these trends pose a serious threat to the future of the all-volunteer force. If only 29 percent of the nation’s young adults are even qualified to serve, and these negative trends continue, it is inevitable that the U.S. military will suffer from a lack of manpower,” the report said.

Eating Junk

The New York Times reported last week that obesity is also a growing problem in China, where 34.3 percent of adults are considered overweight and 16.4 percent obese. Health officials in Beijing point to processed food consumption and greasy meals in restaurants. The report pointed out that Coca-Cola’s lobbying in the country has generally produced a government focus on exercise rather than healthy eating. But one health official pointed to the beverage as playing a role in obesity among the young.

“The frequent consumption of sugary beverages by children and adolescents has presented itself as a prominent problem,” Lin Bin, the Deputy Director of China’s National Health Commission, said, according to the report.

“Technology – like robotics, guided missiles, and drone warfare will play a much more meaningful role in any future hot conflict, but troops on the ground will always be required.”

The Heritage Foundation reported that in 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower noticed the “alarming reports about the state of fitness among American youth” and created public awareness by establishing the President’s Council on Youth Fitness.

“Children and adults alike need to understand an integrate quality nutrition, frequent exercise, less time on the couch, and more time outdoors in order to improve their quality of life and health,” the report said.

***TREND FORECAST**: The longer people are locked down, the heavier they will get. Nutrisystem estimates approximately 76 percent of Americans gained some 16 pounds since the COVID War began.*

With gyms closed, people out of work, working from home, children learning online, etc., their survey found 42 percent of Americans are less physically active.

In 2018, the Milken Institute released a new study, "America's Obesity Crisis: The Health and Economic Costs of Excess," which found that chronic diseases driven by the risk factor of obesity and overweight accounted for $480.7 billion in direct health care costs in the U.S., with an additional $1.24 trillion in indirect costs due to lost economic productivity.

The total cost of chronic diseases due to obesity and overweight was $1.72 trillion – equivalent to 9.3 percent of the U.S. GDP. Obesity as a risk factor is by far the greatest contributor to the burden of chronic diseases in the U.S., accounting for 47.1 percent of the total cost of chronic diseases nationwide.

Therefore, as we have forecast, weight loss and whole health healing businesses and enterprises will be profitable OnTrendpreneur® opportunities in the coming years... a key element of the "New Age 2.0" trend as people shape up rather than go down.

There will also be numerous opportunities for OnTrendpreneurs® to design/provide products and services to assist the overweight and obese who will not lose weight.

***TRENDPOST:** It should be noted there was no mention in the "Missions Readiness" report that the people in the poor health conditions they list are also those most susceptible of dying from the virus.*

RICH GETTING RICHER: MUSK & BEZOS RAKING IT IN

The wealthiest people in the U.S. watched their net worth increase by about $1 trillion last year, even though so many suffered financial hardships due to the virus outbreak.

The Washington Post reported that two of the top earners included its boss, Jeff Bezos, and Tesla's Elon Musk. Bezos earned $70 billion last year, bringing his net worth to about $186 billion, and Musk's net worth increased by $132 billion to settle at about $159 billion. The paper reported that most of those fortunes are tied up in company stocks.

The paper tried to put their wealth into perspective and reported that $25 billion would be enough to end all hunger in the U.S. eight times over, according to one estimate. The report also seemed to portray Bezos and Musk as two unlikely candidates to make such a donation.

The paper reported an analysis in June of charitable giving by the country's richest showed that Bezos donated $25 million to "All in WA," which the paper described as a "statewide relief effort," and $100 million to "Feeding America." The amount is equivalent to an average American cutting a check for $85 to a charity.

TRENDPOST: *While the billionaires are getting richer, some eight million Americans have fallen into poverty. A report from analysts at the University of Chicago released last month said the poverty rate in the U.S. went from 9.7 percent in June to 11.7 percent in November – the biggest yearly increase since the federal government began tracking the poverty rate in 1960.*

There are ten million less jobs since politicians launched the COVID War, and there have been 70 million new claims for unemployment benefits. Eighty-five million

Americans say they don't have the money to pay for basic needs such food and rent.

COVID CLAMPDOWNS MOTIVATE ONTRENDPRENEURS®

With people being suddenly put out of work and a new COVID World being created, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, and the U.S. all have seen a jump in new business formations during 2020.

The U.S. registered 82 percent more new businesses in 2020's second quarter than a year earlier. OnTrendpreneurs® looking for new revenue streams are betting heavily on online retailing, as well as startups in information businesses, logistics, and professional services.

France booked 84,000 new businesses in October, a record number as well as a 20-percent gain year over year. In September, Japan recorded 10,000 new enterprises, 14 percent more than a year previous.

In the U.K., 30 percent more businesses incorporated from mid-November through mid-December than in the same period in 2019. Online retailing also led the way here, with food and drink production and take-out food businesses showing strength.

In the U.S., most of the new businesses were one-person ventures with no employees, indicating "people being laid off in the pandemic and starting their own company" out of necessity, Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, told the *Financial Times*.

However, the number of new U.S. businesses that plan to have salaried employees rose 52 percent, made possible by “low interest rates and new needs,” Daco added.

In the U.K., registrations showed a shift in the kinds of companies being launched, “likely a consequence of the shift in consumption patterns during the pandemic,” noted Alfred Duncan, Oxford University lecturer in economics, told the *Times*.

The U.S. figures “suggest a much more positive outlook for new business formation than after the last recession,” Goldman Sachs economist David Choi commented to the *Times*. “New and younger firms historically account for the lion’s share of net job growth.”

TREND FORECAST: *In just one year, a whole new world order has been created. From working at home, online shopping, virtual education, cut backs in trade shows, conventions, entertainment, travel, tourism, restaurant industry... as many go down new business avenues will be traveled.*

Beyond the financial bottom line, a whole new sound and style of life in the 21st century is now being created. Those who remain on-trend, aware, awake, and continue learn and expand with an open mind will reap the rewards.

WASTE GAS FUELS PROFITS FROM TRASH

“Trash gas” – methane wafting from feedlots’ manure pits, municipal landfills, and similar dumps – is no longer trash. Companies that generate large volumes of the fumes are turning this “renewable natural gas” into a new source of revenue.

Smithfield Foods, the nation’s largest pork processor, is stretching covers across the four-acre manure lagoons at its Missouri plants and installing scrubbers to remove impurities from the methane. By summer, the company expects to sell enough purified gas to area utilities to power 10,000 homes.

Dominion Energy, a utility that supplies electricity and natural gas to customers in 16 states, is investing $500 million in the Smithfield venture. The two are working together on a similar project in hog-rich southeastern North Carolina, which “has the potential to be one of the leading renewable natural gas production regions,” Ryan Childress, Dominion’s director of natural gas development, told the *Wall Street Journal.*

Dominion will spend an additional $200 million to collect biogas from dairy farms in its service areas.

Dominion and its partners also are gathering methane from 26 Utah swine farms and flowing it into a pipeline that sends gas through western states to Bakersfield, CA. The farms’ off-gas will heat about 3,000 homes.

The Southern California Gas Company is working with dairy farmers to ensure that 20 percent of its gas supply will come from biogas by 2030. State regulators have given the company permission to charge customers more for biogas if they explicitly request it.

Chevron has committed $200 million to biogas development. Duke Energy says it has a five-year plan to become a market leader in the new resource.

When the gas market already is clogged with more methane in reserve than it can use, why add more?

Methane, the off-gas from biological waste, is a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent that carbon dioxide. By diverting it into pipelines instead of releasing it into the air, companies can earn low-emissions and renewable fuels tax credits that can be cashed in or sold.

Pipeline companies, which have no conventional renewable fuels to turn into credits, are in the business of laying pipe and gathering gas from production sources. The companies can earn the valuable credits by taking part in biogas projects.

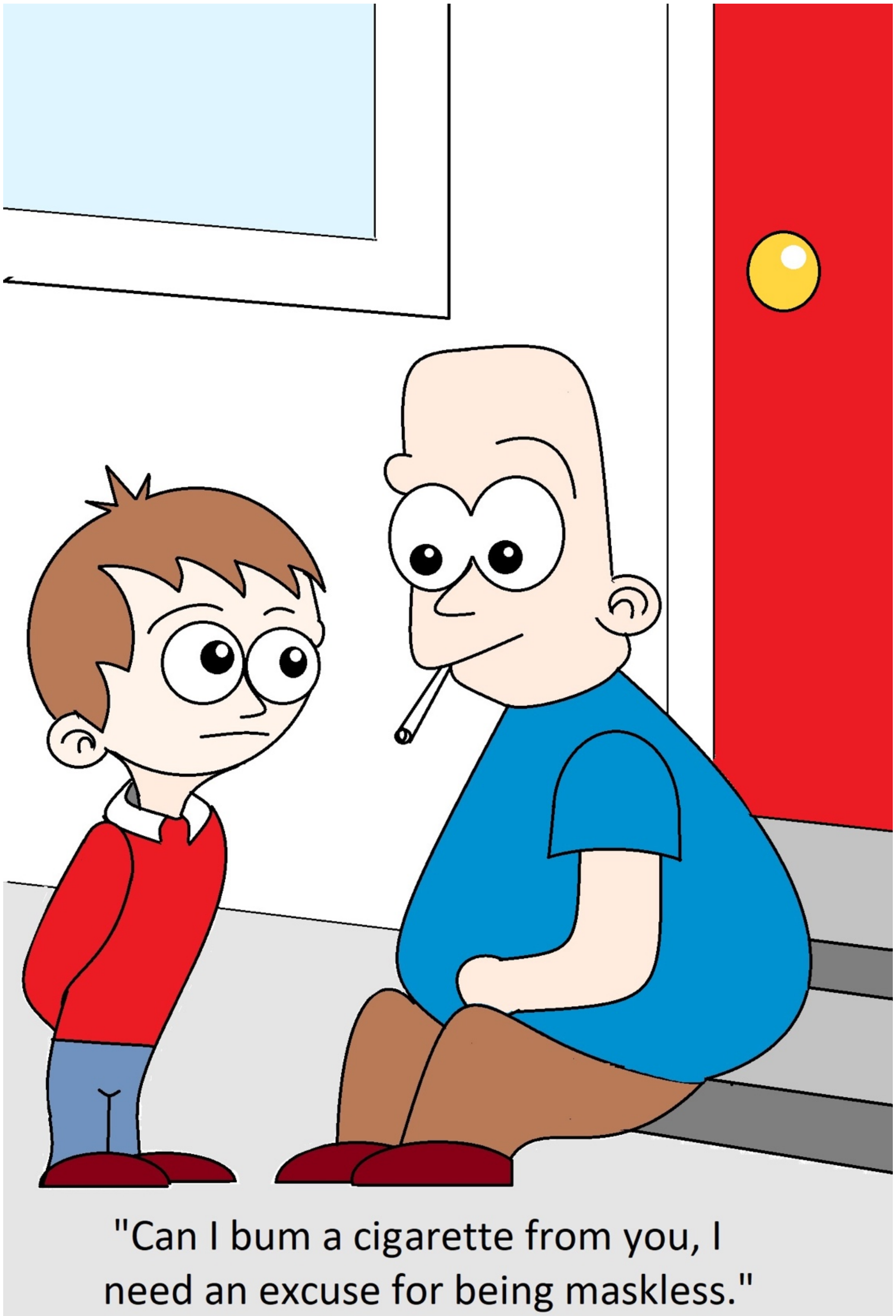
The Pennsylvania-based UGI utility recently sold its share of a coal-fired power plant and invested in an Idaho project harvesting gas from dairy farms.

UGI has learned from its European utilities, CEO David Lindemuth explained in remarks at a December biogas conference quoted by the *Journal*.

“Utilities over there have found out how to remain relevant,” he said. “Keep that invested infrastructure, but also talk about how they can become a partner in reducing greenhouse gases.”

THE ART OF TRENDS

"ANYTHING BUT A MASK" *by Stephen Green*

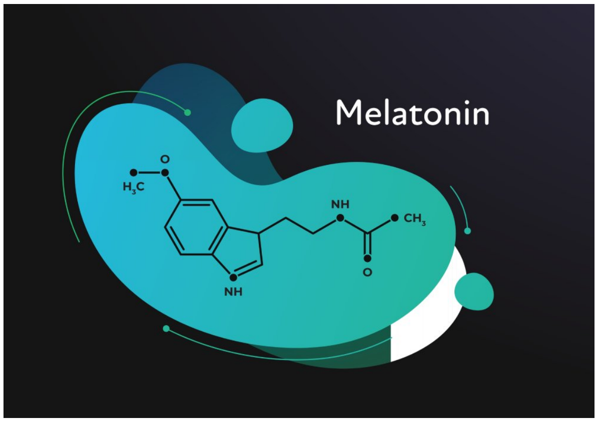


"Can I bum a cigarette from you, I need an excuse for being maskless."

www.MuseumofAwesomeArt.com

TRENDS IN HI-TECH SCIENCE *by Bennett Davis*

MELATONIN IDENTIFIED AS PROBABLE COVID TREATMENT



Melatonin, the body's own hormone that regulates the sleeping and waking, has been identified as a potential treatment for the COVID virus in a study by the Cleveland Clinic.

The study used artificial intelligence to comb through the catalog of existing biochemical substances to see which might be used to neutralize SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the COVID illness.

The AI software returned 34 candidates from among drugs that treat autoimmune, pulmonary, and neurological conditions but ranked melatonin at the top of the list.

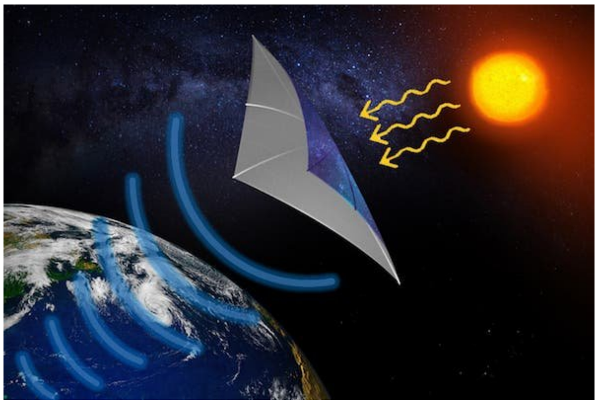
The clinicians then sifted records of 27,000 of their COVID patients to see if there was a correlation with melatonin, which many people take regularly as a sleep aid.

The data showed that people who take melatonin were 30 percent less likely to come down with COVID; among African-Americans, a group the virus has hit especially hard, the chance of contracting the illness was 52 percent less.

Melatonin may not actually battle the virus directly, the researchers theorize. Instead, it may quell the "cytokine storm" associated with the disease – the body's overproduction of defensive biochemicals that then wreak havoc on the body as it tries to fight off the infection. By moderating the body's reaction to the virus, melatonin may let the immune system work normally to deal with the invader in the usual effective way.

TRENDPOST: *Vaccines and drug treatments are key to controlling the virus. But the body's own chemical arsenal is the best first responder in dealing with, and preventing, infection.*

HARVESTING SOLAR POWER FROM SPACE TAKES KEY STEP FORWARD



Gathering solar energy above the clouds and sending it back to Earth has been on scientists' minds for decades. Now the plan has taken a large step toward reality.

The idea is to send high-efficiency solar collectors into space, have them convert the solar energy they make into radio waves, then beam the energy waves back to targets on the ground.

Now defense contractor Northrup Grumman has delivered its first copy of "Helios" to the U.S. Air Force. Helios is the platform that will ferry and house all of the works that will collect, convert, and transmit the harvested energy.

By tasking Northrup to design and build a "space truck," the Air Force not only freed its limited resources for the project to focus on developing the venture's energy-related technologies; it also has created a supplier of off-the-shelf space trucks, which can be bought at a lower price than if the Air Force made its own.

Helios is scheduled to tote its first package of solar energy collectors, converters, and transmitters into orbit in 2024.

TRENDPOST: *Demand for electricity is rising relentlessly as the human race multiplies. However, ground-based renewable energy systems can't yet guarantee a steady supply of power. A space-based alternative could gather and send renewable solar power all day, every day, as a handy supplement that could send* *a steady stream of power to high-volume users such as server farms and military intelligence centers.*

Credit for photo: U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory

DO WINE & CHEESE PROTECT AGAINST COGNITIVE DECLINE?

First, medical science discovered that dark chocolate is a superfood and sex is a better aerobic exercise than jogging.

Now bioscientists at Iowa State University have found that wine and cheese may protect against dementia.

The researchers sifted data from the UK Biobank, a database holding extensive genetic and health details on more than a half-million anonymous individuals.

From 2006 through 2016, participants underwent three cognitive tests that assessed their ability to “think on their feet.” They also answered detailed questions about their diet, including how often they consumed various categories of foods.

The study’s main findings:

Cheese (real cheese, not processed cheese-like substances) is the food most highly correlated with a healthy mind late into life.

Modest daily drinking, especially of red wine, correlates with enduring cognitive ability.

Eating lamb weekly, but not other red meats, seems to help stave off mental decline.

Heavy consumption of salt may hasten or worsen Alzheimer's disease.

The study's authors acknowledged that well-off people consume more wine and quality cheese than others and also tend to have better health care options, which might give them an overall edge in fending off dementia. Those differences might have skewed the study's findings.

TRENDPOST: *Synthetic biology and genetic engineering grab the headlines in progress toward improving the human healthspan. Learning the healing and protective properties of foods will have an equally important, and more accessible, impact on keeping us healthy and vital longer.*