

Little to Celebrate this Labor Day Weekend: Low-Wage America. Protracted Main Street Depression. Economic Recovery is an Illusion

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US workers have little to celebrate this Labor Day weekend or any other one. America is being systematically thirdworldized – represented by weak unions complicit with management or none at all, unable to bargain effectively for higher wages.

Economic recovery is an illusion. A protracted Main Street Depression persists. Poverty is a growth industry. Around 23% of Americans wanting work can't find it.

Most available jobs are rotten ones – temp or part-time low pay/poor or no benefit service ones with no futures. Conditions are getting worse, not better.

Millions of good jobs were offshored to low-wage countries. Millions more may follow. Many displaced workers remain unemployed longterm. Others finding work take huge wage cuts.

Labor force participation is the lowest in 40 years. A new [National Employment Law Project](#) (NELP) report is titled “Low-Wage Occupations See Steepest Drop in Real Wages.”

“Stagnant wages have become a fact of life for nearly all of America’s workers, but workers in lower-paying occupations are finding it especially tough to keep up with the rising cost of living,” NELP executive director Christine Owens explained.

“Not only are their paychecks not growing, but their purchasing power has shrunk considerably, and to a far greater extent than that of higher-wage earners.”

NELP examined median hourly wage changes from 2009 – 2014 for 785 occupations – categorized into five groups with equal weighting.

It found 4% wage declines on average – low and “mid-wage” occupations hardest hit, up to 5.7%. Declines were greatest in restaurant sector jobs. Food preparation workers saw 7.7% lower incomes. For cooks, it was 8.9%.

Janitors, cleaners, personal care aides, home health workers, maids and housekeepers were hard hit. Many job categories expected to see strong growth in number of workers are experiencing above-average real wage declines.

“Five of the ten occupations projected to add the greatest number of jobs between 2012 and 2022 were at the bottom of the occupational distribution in 2014, with real median wages between \$8.84 and \$10.97,” NERP reported. “Six of the ten highest-growth occupations saw real wage declines of 5.0 percent or more between 2009 and 2014.”



At the same time, lowest paid workers earning poverty and sub-poverty wages saw wage declines of 1.6%. How much lower is the bottom of the barrel than already?

Minimum wage workers don't earn enough to live on – why homelessness and hunger affect millions of Americans. Around 3.5 million men, women and children have no place to live. They sleep in parks, under bridges, in shelters, cars or on city streets.

Nearly one-fourth are military veterans. Many others are children, victims of domestic violence or mental illness sufferers – federal, state and local governments doing little or nothing to help them.

Homelessness is mainly an economic problem – caused by unemployment, underemployment and inadequate resources to live on.

During the 1950s and 1960s, government housing programs and other social services eradicated homelessness. Major cuts in these programs caused an epidemic of people unable to afford shelter.

America's safety net is disappearing altogether. Hunger affects one in six Americans. Over 14 million children rely on food banks to eat.

Food insecurity exists in every US county nationwide – at its highest level at any time since the Great Depression. Hunger is a daily reality for around 50 million Americans – affecting 13 million households, including working ones.

Census data show poverty or borderline conditions affect around half the population. Food stamps provide a woefully inadequate \$1.40 per person per meal. Food banks supplement recipients when monthly benefits run out. Most often it's around 10 days or more before month's end.

Official numbers understate reality. Growing millions suffer out of sight and mind. Government is dismissive at all levels.

America's wealth disparity is unprecedented. Income inequality is greater than in all other developed countries. Over three-fourths of workers live from paycheck to paycheck – one

missed one away from homelessness, hunger and despair.

Neoliberal harshness is official US policy. Bipartisan complicity force-feeds it – institutionalized when vital aid is needed. America wages financial war on its own people. Its social contract is on the chopping block for elimination.

Monied interests alone are served – ordinary people increasingly ignored. America's political system is too corrupted to fix. Voters have no say whatever. Democracy is pure illusion.

Anyone believing they can change things electorally is living in a fantasy world. America's one-party state with two wings affords voters no choice at all – no matter what candidates represent them at all levels of government.

The only solution is revolutionary change – bottom up, never top down.

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