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# Speak Out Now

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## How Dare They Take Our Lives, Our Jobs and Our Homes!

The recent Camp Fire in Northern California caused 88 deaths, and hundreds are still missing and unaccounted for. It burned down over 12,000 homes and 150,000 acres of land. It destroyed a whole town and sent the equivalent of a week's worth of California vehicle emissions into the air. Smoke filled the air throughout northern California through the Central Valley and southern California. Thousands of people have lost everything and most remain without any permanent place to live.

Why did this happen? Who is responsible? All evidence points to PG&E, the private utility company that controls the majority of California's gas and electricity delivery system. Last year, it was PG&E's failure to maintain power lines and to trim trees that brought down power lines in a high wind. This year it seems that it was, again, the failure to carry out basic maintenance that caused the Camp Fire. For the second time in a little over a year, PG&E, has committed mass murder.

Following last year's fires in Sonoma and Napa, Sacramento politicians hurried to pass legislation to shift the costs of the lawsuits PG&E faced to PG&E's customers. With this handout PG&E reported profits of \$1.66 billion and paid its CEO \$8.6 million dollars, more than 100% over what she got in 2016. Jerry Brown has again proposed another bailout for PG&E after the recent fire to protect the company against bankruptcy.

But PG&E is not alone with its corporate greed. The day after Thanksgiving, GM announced it was closing five plants in Ohio, Michigan, Maryland and Ontario, with more plant closures threatened in 2019. GM is also threatening to cut its workforce even further with 14,000 layoffs in January.

This is a company that received \$514 million from the recent tax cuts, supposedly to protect jobs. GM used this money to increase its profits recently announcing that its third quarter profits in North America had increased by 37%. GM paid out \$10 billion in stock buyouts and dividend payouts to its richest investors. This is not new, GM has enjoyed

decades of other government bailouts, tax breaks and subsidies that have never saved jobs.

GM is not alone in threatening lay offs and closures. Despite similar bailouts and subsidies, Ford has announced that it will reduce its salaried U.S. workforce as part of an \$11 billion cost-cutting plan. In October, Ford put 2,000 Kansas City autoworkers on a temporary layoff and more layoffs and plant closings are expected soon. And Fiat-Chrysler plants are threatened with layoffs in Illinois and Indiana. When an auto plant closes it has a ripple effect on the businesses in the community and the other workplaces linked to auto. So these cuts affect many more workers and their families, and are devastating for entire communities.

This is what U.S corporations consider acceptable holiday wishes to workers and their families. So much for Trump's proclamation of giving our tax dollars to these companies to save American jobs. But it has certainly been effective when it comes to saving American profits!

As we look at the behavior of PG&E and the big auto companies, can we have any doubt about what drives the decision-making of these corporations? When we look at the actions of the California government and Trump and the Congress, can we have any doubts about whose interests they serve? They are the guarantors of the 1%. Their job is to make sure that the profits keep rolling in. And then they insult us by making us pick up the tab, while we suffer the consequences of their greed.

They are destroying our planet. They are threatening our health and our lives. They are forcing us to live in constant insecurity with no guarantee of an income, or a place to live, or decent healthcare and educational opportunities.

Isn't it about time to stop their plunder and murder and disregard for our lives?

Isn't it long overdue that those of us, the 99%, who do all the work to make this society run, should have the right to a healthy, secure and happy life?