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Today's rant is brought to you by the "Great Barrington Declaration".

The gist of the Libertarian "Great Barrington Declaration" is that the current government-imposed lockdown is harmful. And so we should remove that lockdown and instead just let coronavirus run free among "low risk populations" until we achieve herd immunity instead.

This apparently is getting a lot of interest in the Administration. I'd just like to take the opportunity to point out two tiny little flaws in the argument.

1 Hasn't anyone noticed that we're not in lockdown any more?

The whole gist of this Libertarian "Great Barrington Declaration" is that the harm caused by the current government-mandated shutdowns exceeds the harm that would occur under some (purely hypothetical) spread of COVID-19 limited to low-risk populations.

That's an interesting concept. Might have even been worth debating back when we actually had some such shutdowns. **But, apparently, nobody signing onto this "Declaration" has noticed one tiny little flaw in the argument: We're not in lockdown any more.**

As a society, we might have had cause to debate this back in April. But now?

I don't know about you, but I'm free to go eat in a restaurant, fly in a plane, work out in a gym, see a movie, and so on. There's no rule or regulation against doing that.

And yet, certain business segments related to people crowding together continue to do poorly. Airplanes travel. Travel in general. Indoor restaurant seating. Gyms. I don't need to belabor it.

The idea that *government policy* is somehow the limiting factor, right now, isn't just wrong, it's *absurdly wrong*. It requires you to ignore the fact that we're all free to engage in these activities now. But few choose to. Government policy may set some capacity limits, in some areas. But that's it.

So, what's the problem for these segments of the economy? Its free choice. For example, surveys show that only about 10% of the US population is comfortable going back to indoor restaurant meals. It's not government regs that are keeping people out of restaurants. It's common sense.

And that's what makes this pure theater-of-the-absurd. We have the Libertarians coming out for this policy, to "save the economy", when the problem isn't government regulation, it's that people are freely and rationally making individual choices to avoid higher-risk situations.

School opening is different. That's a government (not private-sector) function, it's a local decision, and presumably reflects the will of the people. As in, I'll bet if we'd taken a vote on it, FCPS wouldn't be doing in-person classes. Which is exactly what they're (not) doing.

In any event, the whole discussion requires you to ignore everything that has happened since April, and *pretend that we're still in lockdown*. Which we are not.

2: Can anybody out there do long division?

I'm not talking paper-and-pencil. Feel free to use a calculator as you follow along with this ultra-sophisticated argument. Ready?

$100,000 / 80 = 1250.$

How long will it take to achieve herd immunity? I've addressed this in prior posts. Let me do the math again.

The highest rate of infection ever observed in a U.S. state is what we're seeing right now in ND. That's 80 cases per 100,000 per day. And, at that rate, they are perilously close to running out of staffed ICU beds.

Can anybody out there calculate that $100,000 / 80 = 1250$ days, or three-and-a-half years to get 100% infected, at the highest rate of disease spread ever observed in the US.

We'll have vaccines in hand and distributed long before we'd achieve herd immunity by a strategy of "let 'er rip".

Feel free to reduce that to just 70% infected. Feel free to cut it down by some reasonable factor (say, 3) to account for infected cases not officially diagnosed. I don't really much care how you play with it, the lesson is the same.

Even ignoring the mortality and morbidity, the proposed policy is inferior because it would take more time to get us back to "normal" than just staying the course on vaccine development and administration.

3 Conclusion

It has often been said that generals always fight the last war. But at least they fight the last war with the best tactics that could have applied in that war.

Here, we're being asked to fight the last war (lockdowns that are no longer in place) using tools that aren't even the best available. This proposal isn't quite the stupidest thing ever to come out of academia. But I'd say it's in the running.

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