

## The ultra-greedy and the rest of us



By Nate Smelle

THERE IS ALWAYS something in the news to worry about these days. I suppose this has been the case for as long as humans have been exploiting and killing one another for profit. Still, thanks to social media, at no other time in human history have the world's most greedy had the potential to manipulate the masses with misinformation on the scale they do today. And, as we should have expected, those with desire to hoard more wealth and resources than they or their families could ever possibly need in several lifetimes, have no qualms about using this power to steal from the working class, and the most vulnerable in society to make themselves richer than the rest of us combined. According to Bloomberg Billionaires Index, as of March 2025, the combined net worth of the world's top five greediest individuals is approximately \$1.1 trillion. This figure is comparable to the Gross Domestic Product of several countries. For the record, the list of the world's five greediest individuals includes: Elon Musk (\$320-billion); Jeff Bezos (\$217-billion); Mark Zuckerberg (\$211-billion); Bernard Arnault (\$175-billion); and, Larry Ellison (\$173-billion). To put this absurd accumulation of wealth at the top into perspective, the combined national GDPs of Burundi (\$3.463-billion), Sierra Leone (\$6.412-billion), and South Sudan (\$5.31-billion) add up to only \$15.185-billion. Recognizing that the combined populations of these nations is approximately 33.631-million people, and that the average annual income for individuals in these countries is less than \$800USD per year, imagine how many people's quality of life would be improved if these five hungry ghosts were to learn to share. This comparison highlights that the personal wealth of these top billionaires rivals the economic output of entire nations, underscoring the significant concentration of wealth among a few selfish individuals globally. There are all sorts of ways to crunch these numbers that show the world would be a much better place for all of us if billionaires suddenly disappeared, or at the very least learned to share. For instance, if the wealth of the ultra-greedy five was distributed among the three African countries mentioned above, all 33.6-million+ people living there on less than \$800USD a year would each receive financial assistance in the amount of approximately \$32,600. Would this change the quality of life of tens of millions of people for the better? Of course it would. But, helping people has never been a priority of the ultra-greedy. Now a complete redistribution of the ultra-greedy's wealth might not be all that popular of an idea with the slightly less greedy, so let's consider a compromise. How about the top five greediest individuals share a little bit for the common good of humanity? Perhaps they take \$15.185-billion from their combined \$1.096-trillion to provide the economies of these three developing nations a big boost. Wouldn't doubling the GDP of these nations as a sort of one-time economic stimulus be a bigger step towards world peace than turning a blind eye to their suffering? Although nearly every one of us would claim to understand the difference between right and wrong, somehow, as a society we have come to value the rights of the ultra-greedy to exploit people and the planet over the basic needs and quality of life of the multitudes. Australian philosopher Peter Singer addressed the origin of this obscene economic inequality in his essay, *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*. Providing insight into why the basic needs of the many are always more valuable than the cruel and decadent lifestyles of the ultra-greedy, Singer wrote: "When we buy new clothes not to keep ourselves warm but to look 'well-dressed' we are not providing for any important need. We would not be sacrificing anything significant if we were to continue to wear our old clothes, and give the money to famine relief. By doing so, we would be preventing another person from starving. It

follows from what I have said earlier that we ought to give money away, rather than spend it on clothes which we do not need to keep us warm. To do so is not charitable, or generous. Nor is it the kind of act which philosophers and theologians have called 'supererogatory'—an act which it would be good to do, but not wrong not to do. On the contrary, we ought to give the money away, and it is wrong not to do so."That's not to say that those who work harder than others shouldn't be compensated for their efforts. However, there is no amount of work that one can perform which justifies allowing one individual to hoard \$360-billion, when the total net worth of an entire country such as Burundi—home to 13.69-million people—is just \$3.463-billion. I doubt that anyone reading this is truly part of the tiny faction of the ultra-greedy plundering our planet and stealing the potential of future generations to live a happy, healthy life. But, some of you who have made it this far down the page do support these eternally thirsty con artists at your own, unfairly our own peril. So, my only question for you, the working class greed worshippers is: why hand over your hard-earned tax dollars to the oligarchy that is so eager to pick your pockets and take away your health-care, education, workers' rights, and clean environment? Do you really think the ultra-greedy care about you or your loved ones at all?