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Shutting down the government

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The recent U.S. government shut-down and the budget deal to avert a new one make it clear whose interests it serves.

Long-term unemployment benefits were allowed to expire in the budget deal, leaving millions of workers without any form of sustenance. (Now the Democrats are making a show of trying to reinstate the benefits, but had they really cared about the jobless they would have used the leverage the budget impasse offered.) Corporate tax loopholes were left untouched, and food stamps avoided another round of cuts only because the polytricksters can not agree on how deep those cuts should be. (At present, the program is generous enough that most recipients make it into the third week of the month before running out of food and turning to the soup kitchens to survive, so the need for cuts is obvious to all.)

During the shutdown, health and safety inspections of workplaces stopped, as did oversight of polluters. Museums, art galleries and public parks were closed. No one answered the phones at agencies charged with “enforcing” workers’ rights. But the border guards were out in full force, making sure none of our fellow workers crossed the borders money flows across so freely. The military continued its operations. No one was released from

prison, not even those the administration concedes are victims of unfair treatment in the war on drugs. Whistleblowers like Private Manning were not set free; the persecution of those accused of lifting the curtain on the government's secrets did not stop.

We can see what is important to the bosses in the list of essential "services" continued during the government shutdown, and in the list of those shuttered.

Even more telling was the pundits' bleating. The government shutdown was not so bad, they said. We can get by just fine without parks and art, without labor rights and the like. What really matters – and on this the pundits were unanimous – is that Republicans back down on their threat to not lift the debt ceiling.

If they didn't, horror of horrors, the government might go into technical default. The bankers would not receive their money on time! Financial markets would rebel! Catastrophe would ensue!

One can almost see the platoons of bankers, decked out in three piece suits, fountain pens in hand, parachuting in from their global tax havens to occupy Washington DC and set things right. Money must prevail! Debts must be paid!

They really don't go to all that much trouble to conceal who's in charge, and whose interests really matter.