

YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN

April 16, 2020

Letter: Inoculation

- Robert F. Lyons, Kennebunkport, Maine

Your editorial states it well: “When this pandemic finally ends, there will be many assessments regarding the cost in lives and capital.”(Press & Dakotan, April 3)

When the Great Famine swept through Ireland, 1845 to 1850, John Mitchel, Irish nationalist wrote: “The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.”

President Donald Trump did not cause the coronavirus pandemic, but his denials and delays facilitated its catastrophic spread:

- Jan. 22: “We have it totally under control.”
- Feb. 28: “It’s going to disappear. One day, it’s like a miracle, it will disappear.”
- April 3: “I don’t think I’m gonna be wearing a mask.”

Trump is driven by the same principle of laissez-faire economics adopted by Charles Trevelyan, assistant secretary to the Treasury of Britain in charge of Ireland’s famine relief: let nothing interfere with the initiative of individuals in pursuit of their own desired goals to achieve wealth. The policies of both men were marked by denials of the epidemic’s spread and niggardly assistance to the sick and dying.

Trevelyan is represented in the 1979 folk ballad, “The Fields of Athenry,” the story of a starving man convicted for stealing from the abundant food supply:

“By a lonely prison wall, I heard a young girl calling

Michael they have taken you away,

For you stole Trevelyan’s corn.”

Our gifted scientists may develop a vaccine to fight the deadly coronavirus in the next year and a half. But if our country is smart, it will inoculate us from the man occupying the White House again in the November election.