Amazon's Jeff Bezos congratulates Biden as the president-elect packs his transition teams with servants of the corporate oligarchy

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Amazon oligarch and COVID-19 profiteer Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man, congratulated president-elect Joe Biden following the declaration four days after the November 3 vote that Biden had won the US presidential election.

"Unity, empathy and decency are not characteristics of a bygone era," Bezos wrote on Instagram, congratulating Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. "By voting in record numbers, the American people proved again that our democracy is strong."

This sentiment was echoed on November 7 by the Business Roundtable, including Bezos as well as the chief executives of Apple, Cisco, Microsoft and Salesforce. The big business organization issued a statement that said: "Business Roundtable congratulates President-elect Biden on his election as 46th President of the United States. We also congratulate Vice President-elect Harris on her historic accomplishment as the first woman, Black woman and person of South Asian descent to be elected Vice President of the United States… We look forward to working with the incoming Biden Administration and all federal and state policymakers."

Last week, Biden's transition team posted the names and most recent employers of members of its agency review teams on the website buildbackbetter.org. Given the composition of these teams, it is easy to see why Bezos and his fellow oligarchs are in a congratulatory mood.

The individuals who have been appointed are listed alongside the company for which they most recently worked, and organized into "teams" based on the government operations they are tasked with reviewing, such as the departments of Commerce, Defense, Education, Labor, State and Homeland Security.

The composition of these agency review teams demonstrates the intersection, if not outright integration, of the technology monopolies, academic aristocracy, beltway think tanks, trade union bureaucracies, giant law firms and the military-intelligence apparatus of war and repression at home and abroad.

Amazon will have not one, but two seats on the transition teams. Tom Sullivan, Amazon's director of international tax planning, will sit on Biden's Department of State team. In addition to Sullivan, Mark Schwartz, an "enterprise strategist" for Amazon Web Services, will serve on the extremely powerful Office of Management and Budget (OMB) team. The OMB oversees the $5 trillion federal budget and exerts influence across a broad range of federal regulatory frameworks.

In addition to figures from Amazon, Nicole Isaac, senior director of North American policy at LinkedIn, will sit on the Department of Treasury team. Brandon Belford from Lyft will serve on the Office of Management and Budget team, along with Divya Kumaraiah from Airbnb.

Shara Mohtadi of Bloomberg Philanthropies, which is funded by the donations of billionaire oligarch Michael R. Bloomberg, will sit on the Council on Environmental Quality. And no less than four individuals, serving in various capacities, are drawn from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, which is co-owned by Facebook oligarch Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan.

Arun Venkataraman from Visa will sit on the team tasked with reviewing the Office of the United States Trade Representative, which will also review the US International Trade Commission and the US Trade and Development Agency. This team will also include Ted Dean from Dropbox.

The labor bureaucracies will also have seats at the table, demonstrating their complete integration into the apparatus of capitalist rule. Beth Antunez, Shital Shah and Marla Ucelli-Kashyap of the American Federation of Teachers, together with Donna Harris-Aikens of the National Education Association, will sit on the Department of Education team.

The labor bureaucracies are also represented by LaQuita Honeysucker from the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, who will be on the Department of Agriculture review team, while Josh Nassar of the United Auto Workers will sit on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau team.

Brad Markell of the AFL-CIO will sit on the Department of Energy Team. His name appears right before that of Trisha Miller from the venture capital firm Gates Ventures.

On the Department of Labor team will be Jennifer Abruzzo of the Communications Workers of America, Dora Chen of the Service Employees International Union, Jessica Chu of the Amalgamated Transit Union International, Nadia Marin-Molina of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), and Shaun O'Brien of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, among others.

The major academic institutions represented on the list include Harvard Law School, the University of Michigan Law School, New York University School of Law, Duke University, Stanford

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University, Georgetown University and others. Major law firms and consulting firms include Deloitte Consulting; DLA Piper; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe; Sidley Austin; Covington & Burling; and Latham & Watkins.

The racial and identity politics promoted by the Democratic Party did not fail to be reflected on the list, with Bonnie Jenkins appointed to the Department of State team from an organization titled Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security. Jenkins, a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, previously served as the coordinator for threat reduction programs in the Obama administration's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation.

The Department of Defense team will be led by Kathy Hicks from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), who will be joined by Melissa Dalton and Andrew Hunter, also from the CSIS; Stacie Pettyjohn, Christine Wormuth and Terri Tanielian from the RAND Corporation; Ely Ratner from the Center for a New American Security; and Lisa Sawyer of JPMorgan Chase, among others.

The composition of Biden's agency review teams exposes and refutes all of the pseudo-left and opportunist groups in the orbit of the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracies, which have throughout the year attempted to persuade American workers that Biden, the Democratic Party and the unions represented some sort of channel through which they could advance their own independent interests.

The parade of lobbyists, servants and agents of the capitalist class into the incoming Biden administration prompted a defensive article in the *New York Times* on Thursday, titled "Progressives Press Biden to Limit Corporate Influence in Administration."

The title of the article essentially acknowledges that "corporate influence" (i.e., corruption) is playing a pervasive role in the formation of the incoming administration, and suggests "limits" on that influence.

The article concedes that "Mr. Biden's team included executives from Amazon Web Services, Lyft, Airbnb and a vice president of WestExec Advisors, a Washington consulting firm whose secretive list of clients includes financial services, technology and pharmaceutical companies."

The *Times* then points to the efforts of "progressive Democrats" who are advocating "for tighter ethics rules." This is nothing but a fig leaf for the otherwise naked domination of the Democratic Party by the interests of the military-intelligence-corporate-financial oligarchy.

The facts presented in the *Times* article themselves paint a devastating picture of how the so-called "left" wing of the party is being shoved aside as the fat cats shoulder their way into the new administration. In a joint letter sent Thursday, a number of organizations associated with the so-called "progressive wing" of the Democratic Party pleaded with Biden not to "nominate or hire corporate executives, lobbyists, and prominent corporate consultants," and to adopt "ethics" rules to limit corruption.

These and other feeble efforts by the "progressive Democrats" are being unceremoniously ignored. The *Times* itself was compelled to acknowledge that "Mr. Biden has not always shared the left's concerns about lobbying."

Tendencies like the Democratic Socialists of America were used by the Democratic Party during the election campaign to further the Democrats' electoral prospects, but within days of the vote they were tossed aside and roundly denounced for having supposedly cost the Democrats votes and positions with their "radical" and "socialist" rhetoric.

These "socialist" elements had been promised "space" in a Biden administration, but they showed up after the election only to find their "Green New Deal" and other promised reforms piled up in trash bags by the curb.

There is nothing unexpected about the emerging right-wing, pro-war, pro-Wall Street composition of the incoming Biden administration. Biden himself spent decades in Washington as a corrupt bag-man for wealthy interests in the state of Delaware, the legal headquarters of hundreds of thousands of corporations that take advantage of its business-friendly laws.

As vice president, Biden was reportedly opposed even to the barebones rules against corruption that were imposed during the Obama presidency. In the words of the *Times*: "When he was vice president under Mr. Obama, Mr. Biden bristled at the strict lobbying rules, which he contended would deprive their nascent administration of experienced talent."

From the moment Biden secured a lead in the voting results, the Democratic Party swung viciously to the right, attacking "socialism" and the "left" in general. On a conference call with House Democrats after the election, former CIA agent Abigail Spanberger, now a representative from Virginia, shouted: "We need to not ever use the word 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again."

While the "socialists" have been escorted out of the back door, the front door has been thrown open to corporate executives, lobbyists and consultants to staff the new administration.

American workers should sever all ties with the Democratic Party, an old political mafia totally dominated by the capitalist class, as well as with all organizations and tendencies still promoting illusions in it.

Amazon workers, for example, cannot fight against Amazon with a political party stacked with agents of Amazon. They need their own organizations, which they must build and control themselves.

The formation of rank-and-file committees must be seen as an absolutely necessary measure for collective self-defense against the raging pandemic, against violent and fascistic plots emanating from Trump and the Republican Party, and against the domination of wealthy interests over the whole rotten political and social order.

This must be linked to the building of a mass socialist movement to put an end to capitalism and establish a workers' government.

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