

Biden delivers pablum and pretense as he consolidates a right-wing administration

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In a brief Thanksgiving address Wednesday and a longer interview on NBC broadcast Tuesday night, President-elect Joe Biden gave vague and dishonest assurances to the American people that the coming to power of a Democratic administration in January will mark a return to “normal” in American political and social life.

Biden made no warning about the continuing refusal of President Donald Trump to acknowledge his defeat in the November 3 election, even as the margin in the popular vote passed well beyond six million votes, with Biden becoming the first US presidential candidate ever to win 80 million votes. In the Electoral College, the archaic and anti-democratic structure for deciding the presidency, Biden leads by 306 to 232, although Trump is still seeking to overturn the results in a half dozen closely contested states.

Virtually all of Biden’s 18-minute address Wednesday was devoted to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which has already killed 260,000 people in the United States and threatens far more. While Biden struck a more somber tone and paid tribute to scientists and front-line health care workers, he said little to distinguish his approach to fighting COVID-19 from that of President Trump.

He urged families not to engage in large gatherings on either Thanksgiving or Christmas, while holding out the promise that new vaccines that have been developed and are moving through the approval process will bring the pandemic to an end within a matter of months.

Biden argued that the practice of mask-wearing, social distancing and limiting the size of gatherings should be continued until the population is vaccinated.

“We owe that to our fellow citizens who need access to hospital beds and care to fight this disease. We owe it to one another. It is our patriotic duty as Americans,” he said, adding, “Until we have a vaccine, these are the most effective tools to combat the virus.”

Notably, Biden said nothing about any restrictions on economic activity, such as the mandatory shutdown of workplaces carried out last March and April during the initial onslaught of COVID-19. On the contrary, he called

for the federal government to provide “clear guidance to get more businesses and schools open.”

The first immunizations should begin even before he takes office January 20, 2021, Biden said, although he warned that “it is going to take time” to get the vaccine distributed and every American vaccinated.

The rest of the address was an unctuous sermon on the theme that “this grim season of division, demonization, is going to give way to a year of light and immunity.” The language was murky, but the thrust of it was to cover up the deepening social and political polarization in the United States. During a pandemic that has killed 260,000 people and devastated economic and social life, the billionaires have amassed ever greater wealth and the stock market has reached new heights.

Biden proposes to bridge the contradiction between the increasingly desperate conditions of life for the vast majority of the population and the untold wealth of the capitalist financial elite with religious pablum about love and the recognition that all people are “created in the image of God,” along with declarations, which even he admitted were “trite” and “corny,” that “we are all in this together.”

While celebrating the huge turnout in the election, in which more than 150 million people cast ballots despite the pandemic, Biden did not acknowledge the real content of the vote—a massive repudiation of the Trump administration and its policies—or the significance of Trump’s continued refusal to recognize and accept the legitimacy of the vote.

The truth is that the 2020 election marks a major turning point in the decay and collapse of American democracy. For the first time in American history, a president defeated for reelection has refused to concede, and instead mobilized legal and legislative challenges to the outcome, while elevating his most fervent supporters inside the military-intelligence apparatus for a potential extra-legal response to his defeat.

It was notable that while Biden was preaching his insufferable bromides about America’s greatness and the strength of its democratic institutions, President Trump was

phoning in to a meeting of his campaign lawyers, Pennsylvania Republican legislators and outright fascists, pledging to continue his fight to stay in office.

Instead of the strychnine of Trump's frontal assault on democracy, Biden offers the slower-acting but equally deadly arsenic of a return to the policies of the Democratic Party, which under the Obama-Biden administration deported millions, armed the police with weapons of war, and prosecuted more journalists and whistleblowers than all previous administrations combined.

This reality was further demonstrated in Biden's interview with Lester Holt of NBC News, broadcast by that network on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. This discussion initially focused on Biden's naming of six national security officials, including secretary of state, secretary of homeland security and national security advisor, all of them holdovers from the Obama administration and advocates of drone warfare and a more aggressive American posture towards the Middle East, Russia and China.

"America is back. We're back at the head of the table once again," Biden declared. "America's going to reassert its role in the world," he added, presenting this not as American unilateralism, but as the United States leading a "coalition" including both NATO and allies in Asia like Japan, India and Australia. This array of imperialist powers and their client states would be directed against Russia and China.

While claiming that he had "found people... that represent the spectrum of the American people as well as the spectrum of the Democratic Party," Biden has not actually appointed anyone who supported Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren in the Democratic presidential contest, and he does not propose to appoint either Sanders or Warren themselves to any position, citing the closely contested Senate and House as the pretext for not including any senator or congressperson in his cabinet.

While dismissing the "left" wing of the Democratic Party, Biden embraced sections of the Republican Party, including officials who supported Trump, as potential cabinet members, saying, "I want this country to be united."

Turning to the question of the coronavirus, he suggested that vaccination could begin well before he takes office in January, and called for "a lot of money to reopen the schools safely," describing that as the "single best expenditure of our dollars." The purpose of the back-to-school drive is to free up the parents of schoolchildren to return to work in factories, warehouses and offices, generating profits for the capitalist class.

Discussing his priorities for the first 100 days of his administration, Biden suggested an immigration bill with "a pathway to citizenship for 11 million undocumented

immigrants"—the last such bill proposed a "pathway" extending over a dozen years—and the rescinding of Trump executive orders that affected climate change and the enforcement powers of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Biden made no explicit call for measures to provide relief to the millions of workers idled by the coronavirus pandemic whose federal and state benefits have been allowed to expire. Instead, he advocated "immediate assistance to state and local governments to keep them from basically going under."

Rather than aid to the working class as a whole, Biden argued, "the most important thing is to focus on those folks who are always—when a crisis comes they're the first one hit and when recovery comes they're the last ones in—that's minority communities, that have been hurt very badly."

This is a continuation of the Democratic Party policy of deliberately splitting the working class along racial and ethnic lines. In the current talks over passage of a coronavirus relief bill during the lame duck session of Congress, before Trump leaves office, Biden has reportedly sided with those who are prepared to give up any restoration of supplemental federal jobless benefits, which go to all workers regardless of race, in exchange for expanded assistance to businesses owned by blacks and other minorities.

Biden dismissed further investigations into the crimes committed by President Trump and his cronies in office, and he defended the police when Lester Holt raised the question of the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other victims of police violence. "The vast majority of them are straight, honest and responsible," Biden said of the police.



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