

Biden economic team: Straight from Wall Street

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President-elect Joe Biden announced the second major group of cabinet and White House appointments Sunday and Monday, including most of his economic team, drawn almost entirely from the major financial institutions and hedge funds.

The most important nomination, of former Federal Reserve Board chair Janet Yellen to become secretary of the treasury, was leaked to the press last week. Yellen was deputy chair of the Fed from 2010 to 2014, then chair from 2014 to 2018, meaning that she played a major role in economic policy for the bulk of the Obama administration, a period that saw the greatest transfer of wealth from the poor and working class to the wealthy of any time in American history.

Throughout her tenure at the Fed, Yellen was identified with the policy of “quantitative easing,” in which the central bank made effectively unlimited sums of money available to the financial markets. This policy was pursued while the White House, Congress, and the media insisted that there was no money available to create jobs, sustain education and other social services, reduce poverty, or accomplish any other progressive social goal.

Her top deputy at the treasury, officially designated Monday, will be Adewale Adeyemo, a former Obama White House aide who became a senior adviser at BlackRock, the world’s largest hedge fund, after Trump took office. In 2019, Adeyemo left BlackRock to head the Obama Foundation in Chicago.

Adeyemo is one of two BlackRock officers named for high economic posts in the Biden administration, with the *New York Times* reporting that Brian Deeson, another former Obama aide turned investment banker, will become chairman of the National Economic Council, the top White House economic policymaking post.

For director of the Office of Management and Budget, Biden nominated Neera Tanden, currently chief executive of the Center for American Progress (CAP), a major Democratic Party think tank, whose selection is perhaps the most revealing decision of the Biden transition so far.

A book could be written about Tanden’s role in promoting right-wing social policies and the defense of American imperialism while using the language of liberalism and “progressive” politics.

Tanden was a vociferous supporter of Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination in 2016. Tanden became notorious for her attacks against Clinton’s chief challenger Bernie Sanders, which continued during the 2020 campaign, when Tanden aligned with Biden.

Despite the media characterization of CAP as a “left-wing” think tank, its major function has been to prepare and devise right-wing, pro-market policies for Democratic administrations, like the Affordable Care Act, which Tanden played a major role in crafting while she worked in the Obama White House.

CAP endorsed a proposal by Obama, during budget negotiations with congressional Republicans, to calculate increases in Social Security payments through what was called “chained-CPI,” a version of the Consumer Price Index constructed to produce lower increases in benefits—actually cuts in real terms, since the increases would lag behind the real rise in the cost of living for the elderly.

Bernie Sanders opposed chained CPI at the time, but Tanden has continued to support it, while admitting that it is regressive, as a necessary element in a budget “compromise” with Republicans. This, of course, is exactly the posture advocated by Joe Biden throughout the presidential campaign, when he claimed he would be able to find “common ground” with Senate

Republican leader Mitch McConnell and other congressional reactionaries.

Tanden was a co-author of an influential article published in 2012 by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, under the title, “A Systemic Approach to Containing Health Care Spending,” which defended Obamacare as the basis for substantially reducing the cost of health care for both corporations and the government. The lead author of this treatise was Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, brother of the former mayor of Chicago and Obama aide, and a leading public advocate of reducing health care spending aimed at prolonging the lives of the elderly.

While her remit in the Obama White House was domestic policy, Tanden has played a significant role at the CAP in supporting the type of aggressive foreign intervention espoused by Hillary Clinton as secretary of state and then as a presidential candidate.

According to journalist Glenn Greenwald, Tanden argued during the US-NATO attack on Libya in 2011 “that Libyans should be forced to turn over large portions of their oil revenues to repay the U.S. for the costs incurred in bombing Libya, on the grounds that Americans will support future wars only if they see that the countries attacked by the U.S. pay for the invasions.” This anticipated the position taken by Donald Trump in relation to Syria and Iraq.

In 2014, the CAP published a report backing the decision of the Obama administration to intervene militarily in Iraq and Syria on the pretext of fighting the Islamic State (ISIS), an offshoot of the fundamentalist forces backed by the US and Saudi Arabia against the Assad regime in Syria. Last year, the *New York Times* reported that the CAP had received \$2.5 million from the United Arab Emirates to fund national security and international policy studies.

Tanden also has been publicly linked to the slander campaign against imprisoned WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, calling him “the agent of a pro fascist state, Russia” after WikiLeaks published materials damaging to Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election campaign, and branding him “a central reason of why Trump got elected.” Tanden’s own anti-Sanders screeds were among the emails made public by WikiLeaks.

The three members of the Council of Economic Advisers will be Cecilia Rouse of Princeton University

as chair, joined by Jared Bernstein, a longtime Biden adviser and labor economist, and Heather Boushey, who currently heads the Washington Institute for Equitable Growth, a liberal advocacy group.

The six economic nominees announced Monday include four women, two African Americans (Rouse and Adeyemo) and an Indian-American (Tanden). While this is celebrated endlessly by the Biden camp and the media as a cabinet that “looks like America,” the reality is that many of those selected are multi-millionaires. All are vehement defenders of the capitalist system and the “right” of the giant corporations, banks, hedge funds and a few hundred billionaires to control the economic resources of America.

Similarly, when Biden named his seven-person communications team on Sunday, the main focus of media coverage was that all seven were women, three of them black and one Latino. Nearly all are veterans of the Obama administration, meaning they already have extensive practice in lying to the American people and to the world about drone missile assassinations, illegal wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen, global spying by the US intelligence apparatus, and other crimes and misdeeds of Washington.

The main significance of the communications appointments is the integration of individuals from the more liberal wing of the party, including Karine Jean-Pierre, formerly of Move-on, Symone Sanders, who worked for Bernie Sanders in 2016, and Pilar Tobar of America’s Voice, a liberal immigration reform group. They have all moved seamlessly from the supposed “anti-corporate” wing of the Democratic Party to serve in an administration that is utterly dedicated to serving the interests of big business.



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