

Jacobin pleads with Biden and Democrats to make a “psychological shift” left

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In the week since the inauguration of Joe Biden as president of the United States, *Jacobin* magazine, associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), has produced dozens of articles pleading with the incoming Biden administration to “do the right thing.”

One such article, emblematic of the broader political perspective of *Jacobin* and its co-thinkers in the DSA, is headlined “There’s Really No Need to Compromise, Joe” and written by David Sirota.

The article argues that the Biden administration is capable of making “a psychological shift” to the left, with enough pressure from below. Sirota pleads with youth and workers to not “lose hope” in the Democrats, despite their ever-further shift to the right.

Sirota begins his article by noting that just four weeks after Biden promised voters in Georgia \$2,000 stimulus checks if they secured the Democratic Party control of the Senate, his administration is already walking back the deal in Congress. He also notes that the Democrats have indicated they are “open to negotiating” eligibility requirements for the stimulus checks and suggested that it could take at least until March to even pass the legislation.

Sirota makes no mention of the state of the pandemic, which continues to rage unabated throughout the country, or the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol, which *Jacobin* and the DSA have systematically downplayed and covered up over the last three weeks.

He goes on to recount the experience of 2009, the last time that the Democrats controlled all three branches of government: “You’ll recall that back then, Barack Obama and Biden got themselves elected in the middle of an economic crisis after promising to pass a public health insurance option.” By 2010, the Obama administration killed the plan, and as Sirota writes:

“Senate Democrats refused to even bring it up for a floor vote when they had the chance.”

He continues: “The public option fight should be a harrowing cautionary tale for Biden. ... [Biden] of all people should know that this story never ends well.” Sirota concludes by asking, “The question is: Can he and Democrats learn from the past?”

As they promote the fiction that the Democratic Party can be pushed to the left, one might be tempted to reply, “Can Sirota and *Jacobin* learn from the past?” However, in the case of both Sirota and Biden, it is not a question of insufficient mental capacity, however lacking they may be in this regard, but class interests.

Sirota is a longtime Democratic Party operative and former speechwriter for Bernie Sanders. In the early 2000s, he worked in the political department of the right-wing Zionist American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). He presents the Democratic Party and its political operatives as if they are naive and cowardly figures who wish to do the right thing, if only they had the brains and courage.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Democratic Party is a party of Wall Street and the military, and the entire policy of the Biden administration is determined and constrained by what is acceptable to the financial oligarchy.

Now that the Democrats control Congress, their first order of business has been to move to the right. Biden and the Democrats have made clear that even as the Republicans have incited fascistic violence, their call is for “unity” within the state apparatus as it confronts growing opposition from below. This was the entire content of Biden’s inauguration address on January 20.

Consider the current situation in the US: The health care system is on the brink of collapse, hospitals are closing, millions of people are unemployed, and

millions more are food-insecure. The death toll from the pandemic is nearing half a million people.

Biden's "plan" for the coronavirus consists of a limited mask mandate and promises of more rapid vaccine distribution. His advisors have already acknowledged that it will still be months before most people can get a shot, even if they meet their goals. They have ruled out shutting down nonessential production to get the spread of the virus under control and have declared that all K-8 schools will be reopened within three months.

At every point, the position of *Jacobin* has been determined by the interests of the Democratic Party. Their political function is to block an independent political movement of the working class.

During the pre-election and post-election crisis, it sought to cover-up the extreme danger to democratic rights posed by Trump's efforts to overturn the Constitution, culminating in the January 6 coup attempt. In one article, "The Washington Riot Was a Defeat for the Far Right, Not a Triumph," the authors go to great lengths to praise the "quick repudiation" of the coup "by the political and economic elite," insisting that this demonstrates the enduring strength of American democracy.

This corresponded to the Democrats' own efforts to prevent opposition to Trump's actions from creating a social explosion.

In the immediate aftermath of Biden's inauguration, *Jacobin* promoted the fiction that the incoming administration was implementing a fundamental change in policy. It published an article on January 21, the day after the inauguration, proclaiming that Biden's initial measures marked "a more decisive departure from bipartisan Reaganomics than we might have expected." ("If Biden Moves Left, You Can Thank the Left").

After this political fiction was rapidly exposed, Sirota is jumping in to insist that it is necessary to "keep hope alive." Sirota ends his article by insisting: "The good news" is that "there's still time to reverse this trajectory, so now is not the time to give up hope and stop pushing."

The Democratic Party is a bourgeois party, operating in the center of world capitalism. It is the party of the southern slave owners before the Civil War, of Jim Crow segregation and of the anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese restrictions of the late 19th and early 20th

centuries. It is the party that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the conclusion of World War II.

More recently, under the Obama administration, the Democrats oversaw the largest transfer of wealth in modern history from the poor to the rich, record levels of deportations and institutionalization of drone murder.

The policies and positions of the Democratic Party are dictated by the sections of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus that they represent. As for *Jacobin* and the DSA, they function as political auxiliaries of the Democratic Party, speaking for privileged sections of the middle class hostile to the development of an independent movement of the working class.

The critical lesson of the last 200 years of the Democratic Party, including the recent experience in 2009, is that not a single step forward can be taken in the struggle to defend jobs, living standards, and democratic rights, and to defeat the rise of the far right without establishing the political independence of the working class from the Democratic and Republican parties.



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