

Six months of the Biden administration—A balance sheet

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Six months ago, Joseph Biden was inaugurated president of the United States, under conditions of unprecedented crisis of US capitalism and the entire social and political order.

His predecessor, Donald Trump, did not attend the ceremony, signaling his refusal to accept the outcome of the 2020 election. Only two weeks before, on January 6, Trump's supporters had stormed the Capitol and temporarily halted the congressional certification of state electoral votes. The aim of the attempted coup was to stop the transfer of power and establish a personalist dictatorship. In the words of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, it was Trump's "Reichstag moment."

When Biden took office, 400,000 people were dead from the COVID-19 pandemic, while millions were unemployed. Just months earlier, every city, town, and village in America had seen protests in opposition to police violence.

Biden marked the six-month anniversary with brief remarks presenting American society in glowing terms. "For all those predictions of doom and gloom six months in, here's where things stand," he said. "Record growth, record job creation, workers getting hard-earned breaks." He added, "Put simply: Our economy is on the move, and we have COVID-19 on the run."

Summing up his prognosis, the US president proclaimed: "It turns out capitalism is alive and very well." The truth is that the policies of the Biden administration have entirely failed to resolve the social crisis in America and they cannot, because they are based on the framework of American capitalism.

The pandemic, far from being "on the run," is undergoing a new resurgence. Since Biden took office, an additional 225,000 people have died from the

pandemic. All indications are that by the winter, with the new surge accompanying the spread of the Delta variant, the death toll under Biden will have exceeded that under Trump.

The policies of the Biden administration have been driven by the interests of Wall Street and the super-rich. This is why, despite occasional criticisms of Trump's callous and anti-scientific response to the coronavirus pandemic, Biden has pursued the same policy of restoring corporate profit-making by forcing workers back to work and children back to school as quickly as possible, regardless of the dangers to their lives and health.

Trump's response to the economic depression that accompanied the onset of the pandemic was to pour trillions into bolstering the banks, hedge funds and corporations, with bipartisan bills like the CARES Act. Biden pursues essentially the same policy, although with less support from the Republicans than the Democrats gave Trump. He boasts of success on the economic front, although seven million fewer workers have jobs today than before the pandemic began, and millions face wage cuts, poverty, eviction and foreclosure.

Only in foreign policy is there a significant shift from Trump to Biden, and this in tactics only, not strategy. Biden has placed more emphasis on the US utilization of NATO and the "Quad," a de facto alliance with Japan, Australia and India. Significant sections of the military-intelligence apparatus backed Biden against Trump because they sought a more effective mobilization of US power against Russia and China.

And if Biden's statement that "capitalism is alive and very well" were true, it begs the question: Why is there a mounting fascist threat to American democracy?

In the six months since Biden's inauguration, the

Republican Party has maintained its intransigent opposition to any serious investigation into the events of January 6. Half-hearted Democratic proposals, first for an “independent” bipartisan commission to investigate the attack, then for a bipartisan congressional investigation, have been blocked outright or endlessly delayed.

Meanwhile, evidence continues to emerge of the central role played by Trump and his allies in Congress in seeking to carry out a political coup d'état to overturn the results of the election and maintain himself in office. But neither Trump nor his accomplices have even been questioned, let alone tried, convicted and jailed.

Instead, Trump has renewed his agitation against the election, seeking to transform the Republican Party into an openly fascist movement subordinated to his personal authority. And his supporters in the Republican Party are using their control of state legislatures to enact unprecedented and sweeping attacks on the right to vote.

Biden himself acknowledged something of the reality of the crisis of American capitalism in a speech last week in Philadelphia, when he declared “We are facing the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War.” But he offered no way forward, except to appeal to “my Republican friends in the Congress, states and cities and counties to stand up” against this assault—although they are the very ones carrying it out.

In an effort to prop up illusions in the Democratic Party, the representatives of its “left” wing, portray Biden’s policies in extravagant terms. Last week Senator Bernie Sanders claimed that Biden’s “reconciliation” bill on social spending amounted to “the most consequential piece of legislation for working families since the 1930s.” Or, like Bhaskar Sunkara of *Jacobin*, affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America, they express disappointment in what has been achieved so far, but express the hope that “Biden has shown a willingness to think big,” and that additional pressure should be brought to bear on congressional Democrats.

For his part, Biden uses every possible occasion to make clear he has no intention of implementing any measures that challenge the interests of the financial oligarchy, declaring last weekend, “Communism is a failed system, universally failed system. I don’t see

socialism as a very useful substitute.”

The truth is that the Biden administration is based on Wall Street and the military, mobilizing behind it sections of the upper middle class through the utilization of identity politics. Well aware of the explosive social conditions developing in America, moreover, the administration supports the union “organization” campaign at Amazon and the PRO Act, to make it easier to install unions at work locations where they otherwise would have difficulty convincing workers to pay dues for the privilege of having their wages and benefits cut.

It is telling that when workers engage in genuine anti-corporate struggles, like the strikes waged by autoworkers against Volvo Trucks in Dublin, Virginia, the supposedly “pro-labor” president falls completely silent. Biden is for the unions, not for the workers, because he correctly sees the unions as an instrument of the US ruling class in policing the working class.

Workers must draw the lessons of six months of the Biden administration. None of the problems confronting the working class, from the disastrous pandemic response to unparalleled levels of social inequality, to the danger of imperialist world war and fascist dictatorship, can be addressed without breaking the grip of the financial oligarchy over every aspect of society.

This means breaking with both the Democratic and Republican parties and building a new, mass political party of working people, based on a socialist program. All those who seek to reorganize society to meet human need and not the demands of Wall Street should make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party today.



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