

The Electoral College serves to protect the interests of Big Capital

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On November 3 presidential elections were held in the USA. The results have not been confirmed yet. But the vote has already become possibly the most controversial in the history of the country. We asked the famous political activist from New York, Greg Butterfield, to comment on the course of this scandalous campaign.

The U.S. electoral system itself is archaic. Even the participants in the electoral process spoke about it. Isn't it time for reform?

Absolutely! The Electoral College is a relic of slavery, and should have been abolished along with that horrific institution. But the capitalist ruling class of the United States has found it a helpful tool to prevent any genuine representative of the interests of the workers and oppressed from taking the presidency. Both the Republicans and Democrats are loyal to this system and have benefited from it.

Biden is on track to win the 270 electoral votes needed to become president. But the outcome is still in some doubt because Trump has the advantages of his office and the antiquated U.S. electoral system. Trump stacked the Supreme Court, an unelected body appointed for life, with his ideological allies. Three of the current Supreme Court justices helped George W. Bush steal the presidential election in 2000. The Electoral College system is open to manipulation as well.

Many people around the world and even here at home don't understand the Electoral College, and that is a good thing for the rich and powerful. The Electoral College was originally created to protect the interests of slave owners in the Southern U.S. Today it serves a similar purpose for upholding the interests of Big Capital and white supremacy. Smaller, whiter states with fewer workers have much more power in the Electoral College, while states with huge concentrations of workers of all nationalities have much less.

The very fact that there is any question today about who won the election shows how ridiculous this system is. In the popular vote, Biden has over 4 million more votes

than Trump. Yet the outcome rests on a few hundred thousand votes in a handful of states.

Why is a country with such an imperfect electoral system considered a model of democracy that dictates the “rules of the game” to other countries during elections?

U.S. democracy is and always has been a fiction used to justify U.S. economic and military domination of other countries. It's a story used to fool the public at home into supporting brutal U.S. wars, sanctions and economic exploitation. And the local ruling classes of other countries that loyally serve the U.S. try to use this same fiction to their advantage.

For example, the fascist coup last year against President Evo Morales in Bolivia tried to cover itself in the halo of U.S.-style democracy. Fortunately the Bolivian people gave the world a powerful lesson in real people's democracy with their recent repudiation of the coup.

Ursula Gacek, head of the OSCE Presidential Election Observation Mission to the United States, has already stated that the current elections were conducted without serious violations. At the same time, OSCE representatives did not have access to polling stations in 18 states at all. Is it possible to compare the electoral attention of international organizations regarding elections in different countries?

The OSCE was originally supposed to send 500 monitors to the U.S. The number was cut to just 30 because the Trump administration did not extend the standard invitation for observers, and also due to concerns about the wild spread of the pandemic in the U.S.

Of course it is ludicrous for the U.S. to insist on large numbers of election observers

in other countries when its own officials don't welcome them here. Not that we would expect the OSCE, tied to the European imperialists, to make any serious criticism of their U.S. ally.

I would like to point out that a much more serious call for international election observers was made by the December 12th Movement, a Black liberation group with observer status to the United Nations. This group called on the UN Secretary General to bring in international election observers from the African Union and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to monitor the threats of voter suppression. Sadly, but unsurprisingly, the UN declined to take a stand.

There were reports that security measures due to coronavirus infection were so strict that some observers in Michigan were not allowed into the polling center. If such a situation had occurred, for example, in Russia, all international organizations would have already reported election fraud.

There are two sides of this question. Yes, the number of observers was limited (for both parties) in Michigan and other locations out of pandemic concerns. But the Republican observers in Detroit, for example, were attempting to disrupt the vote-counting by flooding the building, shouting at the poll workers, refusing to wear masks, etc. These tactics of the Trump supporters will seem very familiar to those who have studied the disruptive actions of the Ukrainian Maidan movement and other "color revolutions" with a fascist tinge.

And it is equally true that the U.S. would hypocritically condemn the election of any country on its hit list that took similar measures, and that would be true whether a Democrat or Republican, a Trump or a Biden, was in the White House.

Let's continue the analogy, in San Francisco Joe Biden received 86% of votes, in the capital District of Columbia — 92.6% of the vote. At the same time, if Putin or Lukashenko gain 70-80% of votes, it is considered a sign of

fraudulent counting. Are there no double standards here?

There is a glaring double standard. U.S. imperialism frequently lies about elections in other countries to cast doubt on those it regards as its rivals and enemies, and to gain an advantage on the world stage.

At the same time, it's important to realize that there was a truly massive repudiation of Trump in the major U.S. cities, where the great masses of the multinational working class are concentrated. Washington, D.C., is a majority Black city that has been horribly abused by the Trump administration — so this vote is not surprising.

This may be a rhetorical question, but why is Alexey Navalny silent about violations in the U.S.? Why is Transparency International calling for a recount in Georgia, but not in America?

Navalny, Transparency International and their ilk exist to serve the interests of imperialism. If these folks were legitimate, they would have joined the call by people's organizations in the U.S. to send international election observers to protect the rights of Black and other working-class people facing voter suppression and fascist threats. But that is not their role — they exist to help the U.S., British and European ruling classes protect their interests abroad, regardless of who is sitting in the White House.

We have gotten used to the fact that from the point of view of the political mainstream, violations and interference in the electoral process is a characteristic for “Russia, China, Iran, Belarus” and other countries with allegedly unstable democratic traditions. But from now on, has everything changed?

I hope that people around the world will come out of this experience with a better understanding of just how undemocratic U.S. elections really are. The hypocrisy of

the United States in declaring itself the universal arbiter of democracy for the world is on display for everyone to see.

On the one hand, Donald Trump and his supporters have spent months trying to suppress the vote. This is because they knew many people were fearful and ready to repudiate him, his negligence in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and his open calls for racist violence.

So Trump lied, casting doubt on mail ballots without proof. He went so far as to appoint an ally, Louis DeJoy, to sabotage the internal workings of the Postal Service. He tried to intimidate voters, especially Black people and other oppressed nationality minorities, by urging his racist white supporters to “monitor” the polls, including armed fascist gangs.

After the election, Trump immediately declared himself the winner before the votes were counted. Today, his friends continue to threaten poll workers in states like Pennsylvania and Arizona where votes are still being tabulated. In the courts he has tried to stop the counting of legitimate votes.

On the other hand, we know that the Democratic Party brought this upon itself. Earlier this year, the Democratic leaders once again sabotaged the campaign of Bernie Sanders, who put forward a social-democratic program that could have appealed to a much larger number of workers, including some who were caught up in Trump’s web. The Democratic leaders instead nominated Joe Biden, a right-winger with no credibility as an opponent of economic exploitation, racist violence or war. This put them at a big disadvantage.

It’s clear that people came out to vote against Trump, not because they believe that Biden or the Democrats will fix the country’s deep problems. That’s why the Democrats didn’t get the sweeping gains they were hoping for in the Senate and other contests. Interestingly, it was those “outsider” Democrats running on a social-

democratic program, like Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who were most successful.

For those of us who are dedicated to organizing an independent movement in the interests of the working people, it's clear that the struggle for jobs, healthcare, housing, against war and racial injustice, must continue whether Trump or Biden is in the White House.

Have you heard of credible cases of voter fraud in this or previous elections in the United States? Have there been prosecutions in the United States against those who rigged the elections?

There have been no major, credible cases of voter fraud in modern times. The electoral system is very tightly controlled and the choices offered by the two capitalist parties are very narrow and safely within the system.

The real problem has been voter suppression. This manifested very publicly in the 2000 elections in Florida, when right-wing Cuban exiles were mobilized by the Bush campaign to threaten Black voters and senior citizens to prevent them from voting. Since then voter suppression by white supremacists has become a more common problem in some Southern and Midwestern states.

It should be remembered that Black people in much of the U.S. only gained the right to vote after the 1965 Civil Rights Act went into effect. That law did away with a huge array of racist laws and state-approved intimidation tactics especially designed to keep African Americans from voting. The Civil Rights Act was not granted by the ruling class as some act of goodwill — it was forced upon them by the powerful Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and involving millions of Black and white workers.

In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the Civil Rights Act.

Now many states, not only in the South, have enacted laws that put hurdles in the way of Black, Latino, Asian, Arab and Indigenous voters, and poor people of all colors.

There is a lot of controversy about voting by mail. As far as we know, the authorities still can't find 200 thousand missing ballots somewhere. Is it a normal situation? Also ballots delivered later may be either counted or invalid, is that normal?

What we know is that there has been deliberate sabotage by Trump's appointee to head the Postal Service to slow down the delivery of mail ballots, especially in the so-called "swing states" where the Electoral College votes are at stake.

One of the archaic aspects of the U.S. electoral system is that each of the 50 states has its own rules and regulations about mail ballots and absentee ballots. In some states the ballots only count if they are received by election day. In others, they only have to be postmarked by election day to be valid.

Many people were aware of Trump's attempts to sabotage voting by mail. So most people either sent in their mail ballots well ahead of time, or waited to vote in person for fear that their mail ballots would not be counted.

Again, I want to emphasize that this controversy only exists because of the undemocratic Electoral College system. Even 200,000 missing ballots, if that is true, would not have a significant impact on the popular vote.

Judicial Watch published a study conducted in September 2020 which showed that in 353 U.S. districts 1.8 million more voters are registered than eligible voters of voting age. According to Judicial Watch, eight states have registration levels above 100 percent: Alaska, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Vermont. Are these registrations

for tampering purposes?

We should understand that Judicial Watch is a partisan organization loyal to the Republicans, not an objective source. So the figures they offer must be taken skeptically. This group has taken legal actions in various states to purge “inactive” voters, which is a code word for working-class voters — often minorities — who have not voted in recent elections but might wish to vote in this presidential election.

The chaotic character of the U.S. voting system, with each state having its own regulations and being responsible for maintaining voter registration lists, makes it easier for groups like Judicial Watch with a right-wing agenda to spin conspiracy theories. But there is no evidence of vote tampering.

Also, note that of the states they claim to have such inflated numbers of voters, only one — Michigan — would have had any significance for the presidential election’s Electoral College vote.

According to media reports, long dead people voted early. Does this call into question the election procedure itself?

There is a tremendous amount of disinformation coming out of the Trump camp, and sadly much of it is being reported credibly by media abroad. But there is no proof that there is any widespread fraud using the names of dead people.

One widely reported case was that of William Bradley in Detroit, Michigan. This story spread on the internet and became a battle cry for the far right in Michigan and beyond. But in fact, when it was investigated, it was discovered that there was no wrongdoing. Bradley had never been removed from the voting rolls after his death. His son, who has the same name and address, received two ballots by mail. He discarded one and sent in the other — not realizing he had mistakenly submitted the ballot meant for his father.

