

State of the Union: Biden's honest moment “I am a capitalist”

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Tyre Nichols parents at the Capitol for the State of the Union. After a brief acknowledgment, Biden went on to a lengthy praise of the police.

In President Joe Biden's 2023 State of the Union address on Feb. 7, there was one honest moment. Biden said, "I am a capitalist."

Well, he fudged a bit; he should have said, I am a capitalist and a servant to capitalism. But that's a quibble.

Behind all of the rhetoric of "leave nobody behind," almost everyone — with the exception of the wealthiest 1%, including the arms dealers, big oil and gas, and, of course, the Pentagon — have been left behind.

Major cuts to food stamps

When Biden took the podium, the government had announced it was lifting emergency allotments for food stamps. Severe cuts will begin after Feb. 23, 2023. Thirty million people will be impacted in 32 states; 18 states have already cut benefits. The average cut to benefits is \$82 a month.

This is happening in the middle of an inflationary spiral that threatens the working class with runaway food prices and escalating utility and rent costs. Those most impacted will be children and the elderly.

The gap between reality and what Biden said

The reality for workers: In a bipartisan effort, Biden violated the rights of 115,000 unionized railroad workers to strike, consequently denying sick days and forcing an unwanted contract to cater to Wall Street.

And what about the infrastructure bill? As important as new roads and bridges are, it cannot cover up the fact that the Democratic Party and particularly Biden simply surrendered to the right wing.

So much was scuttled: child tax credit payments, guaranteed parental leave, no subsidies for child care expenses, free community college, and funding for public housing repair. Hundreds of billions of dollars in investment in renewable energy was torpedoed.

The urgent need for universal health care has never been clearer.

But instead of taking on big pharma and insurance companies, Biden has been content with putting a cap on the rising cost of insulin for seniors. This is certainly welcome. But on the other hand, ending the emergency measures for COVID will cause the loss of access to free at-home tests, vaccines, and treatments. Pfizer just announced its proposal to charge \$110 to \$130 per vaccine dose.

Assertions on reproductive rights are hollow

Biden and the Democratic Party used the Supreme Court overturn of Roe v. Wade as a cynical tool to turn out the midterm vote; they could and should have fought back.

Biden has the power to take executive action. He could have declared a public health emergency, bypassed the Hyde Amendment, and allowed Medicaid funds to cover the cost of abortions. The Biden administration could have set up abortion clinics on federal lands in states that have enacted bans.

Tyre Nichols' parents and police terror

Tyre Nichols' parents appeared at the State of Union Address at Biden's request. The depth of their pain is unimaginable, and no matter how small any gesture or

reform may appear to be, it is understandable that they would accept Biden's invitation.

On the other hand, no one should give Joe Biden a pass. Rather than defund the police, he increased their budget. And after a brief acknowledgment of the Nichols family, Biden then went on to a lengthy praise of the police in general.

If President Biden were serious about addressing white supremacy, there is much he could be doing, including ordering reparations for the descendants of chattel slavery, disarming the police, and implementing community control.

War on Russia & China

Interestingly, in contrast to the non-stop saber-rattling we have heard for months, Biden didn't seem to talk too much about Putin or the war in Ukraine. Perhaps there is not much more to be said in demonizing Putin. But it might also be that many workers are getting weary of the war and its economic consequences, and it was decided to save this discussion for later in the back rooms.

But this didn't stop Biden from engaging in demagogic attacks on China. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, replied, "China does not fear competing with the U.S. but is opposed to defining the entire China-U.S. relationship in terms of competition." She continued, "It is not the practice of a responsible country to smear a country or restrict the country's legitimate development rights under the excuse of competition, even at the expense of disrupting the global industrial and supply chain."

On the Pentagon budget, there is unity

On Feb. 12, the Hill reported, "A growing number of Senate Republicans are saying that President Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) should take defense spending cuts off the table in their negotiation over the debt ceiling."

While little was said by Biden in his State of the Union on Pentagon spending, he is planning to ask Congress for the largest Pentagon budget in history. This is according to the Defense Department's chief financial officer.

Pentagon Comptroller Michael McCord said, "I do expect it will be a bigger number than Congress provided last year." In December, \$858 billion was allocated to defense spending, \$45 billion more than Biden requested. This included \$817 billion for the Pentagon and billions for nuclear weapons development through the Energy Department and other national security programs.

It is no wonder that with all of the theater associated with the State of the Union Address — that is, the handshaking, the tear-jerking introductions of guests, and yes, even the shouts of "liar" from Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor Green — one thing remains constant. The stoney-faced military generals remain silent and seated at the front as a constant reminder of their power as unshakeable servants to U.S. imperialism, regardless of the president at the podium.

