

American State of the Union: A Festival of Lies

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Before the nation and the world, President Obama pledges to take “action” against “economic inequality,” while simultaneously holding secret negotiations on a Trans Pacific Partnership trade scheme that will quicken the pace of the global Race to the Bottom, deepening economic inequalities. “Lies of omission are even more despicable than the overt variety, because they hide.”

“Believe it,” said the current Prevaricator-in-Chief, in the conclusion to his [annual](#) litany lies. President Obama’s specialty, honed to theatrical near-perfection over five disastrous years, is in crafting the sympathetic lie, designed to suspend disbelief among those targeted for oblivion, through displays of empathy for the victims. In contrast to the aggressive insults and bluster employed by Republican political actors, whose goal is to incite racist passions against the Other, the sympathetic Democratic liar disarms those who are about to be sacrificed by pretending to feel their pain.

Barack Obama, who has presided over the sharpest increases in economic inequality in U.S. history, adopts the persona of public advocate, reciting wrongs inflicted by unseen and unknown forces that have “deepened” the gap between the rich and the rest of us and “stalled” upward mobility. Having spent half a decade stuffing tens of trillions of dollars into the accounts of an ever shrinking gaggle of financial capitalists, Obama declares this to be “a year of action” in the opposite direction. “Believe it.” And if you do believe it, then crown him the Most Effective Liar of the young century.

Lies of omission are even more despicable than the overt variety, because they hide. The potentially most devastating Obama contribution to economic inequality is being crafted in secret by hundreds of corporate lobbyists and lawyers and their revolving-door counterparts in government. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, described as “NAFTA on steroids,” would accelerate the global Race to the Bottom that has made a wasteland of American manufacturing, plunging the working class into levels of poverty and insecurity without parallel in most people’s lifetimes, and totally eviscerating the meager gains of three generations of African Americans. Yet, the closest Obama came to even an oblique allusion to his great crime-in-the-making, was to announce that “new trade partnerships with Europe and the Asia-Pacific will help [small businesses] create even more jobs. We need to work together on tools like bipartisan trade promotion authority to protect our workers, protect our environment and open new markets to new goods stamped ‘Made in the USA.’” Like NAFTA twenty years ago – only far bigger and more diabolically destructive – TPP will have the opposite effect, destroying millions more jobs and further deepening worker insecurity. The Trans Pacific Partnership expands the legal basis for global economic inequalities – which is why the negotiations are secret, and why the treaty’s name could not be spoken in the State of the Union address. It is a lie of omission of global proportions. Give Obama his crown.

The president who promised in his 2008 campaign to support a hike in the minimum wage to \$9.50 by 2011, and then did nothing at all to make it happen, says this is the “year of action” when he’ll move heaven and earth to get a \$10.10 minimum. He will start, Obama told the Congress and the nation, by issuing “an executive order requiring federal contractors to pay their federally-funded employees a fair wage of at least \$10.10 an hour because if you cook our troops’ meals or wash their dishes, you should not have to live in poverty.” Obama neglected to mention that only new hires – a small fraction, beginning with zero, of the two million federal contract workers – will get the wage boost; a huge and conscious lie of omission. The fact that the president does not even propose a gradual, mandated increase for the rest of the two million shows he has no intention of using his full powers to ameliorate taxpayer-financed poverty. We can also expect Obama to issue waivers to every firm that claims a hardship, as is always his practice.

What is Obama’s jobs program? It is the same as laid out at last year’s State of the Union, and elaborated on last summer: lower business taxes and higher business subsidies. When you say “jobs,” he says tax cuts – just like the Republicans, only Obama first cites the pain of the unemployed, so that you know he cares. “Both Democrats and Republicans have argued that our tax code is riddled with wasteful, complicated loopholes that punish businesses investing here, and reward companies that keep profits abroad. Let’s flip that equation. Let’s work together to close those loopholes, end those incentives to ship jobs overseas, and lower tax rates for businesses that create jobs right here at home.” Actually, Obama wants to lower tax rates for all corporations to 28 percent, from 35 percent, as part of his ongoing quest for a [Grand Bargain](#) with Republicans. For Obama, the way to bring jobs back to the U.S. is to make American taxes and wages more “competitive” in the “global marketplace” – the Race to the Bottom.

In the final analysis, the sympathetic corporate Democrat and the arrogant corporate Republican offer only small variations on the same menu: ever increasing austerity. Obama bragged about reducing the deficit, never acknowledging that this has been accomplished on the backs of the poor, contributing mightily to economic inequality and social insecurity.

Obama offers nothing of substance, because he is not authorized by his corporate masters to do so. He takes his general orders from the same people as do the Republicans. That’s why Obama only speaks of minimum wage hikes while Republicans are in power, rather than when his own party controlled both houses of Congress. Grand Bargains are preferred, because they are the result of consensus between the two corporate parties. In effect, the Grand Bargain is the distilled political will of Wall Street, which feeds the donkey and the elephant. Wall Street – the 1 percent – believes the world is theirs for the taking, and they want all of it. Given this overarching truth, Obama has no choice but to stage a festival of lies.

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