

State of the Union 2015: Lethal, Predatory, Delusional

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Tuesday night, in his next-to-last State of the Union address, President Obama flashed the suckers a bag of tricks that has no chance of passing the Republican-controlled Congress, but will allow his apologists to claim that the genuine, more progressive Obama is revealing himself in his final two years in office. Of course, the final-years Obama could have accomplished his modest 2015 agenda, and much more, back in 2009 and 2010, when Democrats dominated both the House and the Senate and the Republicans were in despair and disarray. Which is precisely why Obama chose, instead, to put his party's perishable congressional majorities at the service of bankers, Wall Street, private insurers and Big Pharma. Now that Democrats are the endangered species on Capitol Hill, Obama hangs a piñata of subsidized community college education, additional tax deductions for child care, seven days paid sick leave, higher capital gains taxes on the wealthy, and billions in fees on casino bankers.

On closer examination, his grab bag of bills and requests for legislation contains even less than advertized - a vapor-thin rhetorical veneer for a center-right presidency whose real accomplishment has been to re-inflate the Wall Street casino, flush the last vestiges of secure employment out of the economy, and put the imperial war machine back on the offensive. Corporate pundits describe Obama's antics as an appeal to his party's "base." In a world in which words actually mean something, a politician's base would be composed of the people whose interests he actually serves, rather than those he victimizes. But, such logic does not apply in late capitalist America, where both parties cater to the needs of the moneyed classes; one, shamelessly, without inhibition, the other through deployment of talented liars like Obama.

"The shadow of crisis has passed, and the State of the Union is strong," said Obama, reflecting the corporate consensus that the rich can safely get on with the business of appropriating to themselves the wealth of the world. "Over the past five years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs," he said, failing to clarify that the vast majority of these jobs are low wage and highly insecure, or that five million workers have dropped out of the job market - half a million in December, alone. The economy inhabited by the vast majority of Americans grows smaller and more cutthroat, with nearly all the new wealth accruing to the rich. Yet, "the shadow of crisis has passed...."

Obama celebrated the "resilience" of the "strong, tight-knit" American family, exemplified by a Minneapolis couple that have both regained employment. "Our economy is growing and creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999," said Obama - bad jobs, in a nation of growing inequality. For Blacks, wages relative to whites have regressed to 1980 levels, and Black household wealth has collapsed so completely there is no statistical possibility of ever

reaching parity with whites under the existing economic system – period.

The modern State of the Union address is designed to showcase the transparency of U.S. governance, with all three branches of the American State scrunched together in the space of a TV screen, applauding the leader. But late stage capitalism dare not reorder the world in the light of day. Since almost the beginning of the 21st century, lawyers and lobbyists for the global corporate class have been hammering out the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), sometimes called “NAFTA on steroids,” in total secrecy. Speaking to the American people, last night, President Obama feared to utter the treaty’s name. Instead, he asked “both parties to give me trade promotion authority” – ‘fast track’ passage of the legislation, unread by lawmakers – “to protect American workers, with strong new trade deals from Asia to Europe that aren’t just free, but fair.” If it were fair, of course, they wouldn’t keep it secret. By now, even the illiterate know that NAFTA and other “free trade” pacts smoothed the way for the export of U.S. jobs to the Global South and China, 20 years ago. But Obama inferred to the nation that the new deal will have the opposite effect. “More than half of manufacturing executives have said they’re actively looking at bringing jobs back from China. Let’s give them one more reason to get it done.”

For the record, there is no reason to believe that TPP will cause jobs to flow back to the U.S. from China – quite the opposite. But then, Obama didn’t exactly say that the jobs flow would be reversed; like the worst kind of liar, he only inferred it.

What a farce the whole exercise of bourgeois democratic capitalism has become. The world is made to turn under our feet, in secret, while politicians of the two corporate parties allude to the real substance of economic restructuring only in coded language.

China, having served Obama’s speechifying purposes as the jobs-stealing boogeyman, then becomes a prop for presidential self-congratulation on the environment. “In Beijing,” he said, “we made an historic announcement. The United States will double the pace at which we cut carbon pollution, and China committed, for the first time, to limiting their emissions.” This is Obama, Enviro-Man. But, wait! Here comes Obama as Frack-Man, who has overseen the hyper-production of U.S. oil and gas and turned the White House into PR central for the fracking industry. “We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet. And today, America is number one in oil and gas.” One million new barrels of U.S. oil per day have flooded world markets, further encouraging fossil fuel-intensive development and global warming. He is a super-fracking enviro-marvel.

Weaponized U.S. oil production threatens to destabilize Russia, Iran and Venezuela – and possibly the entire global economy, which is slumping and does not need the extra fuel. But oil warfare is clearly Obama’s purpose. Sanctions are just gravy. “We’re upholding the principle that bigger nations can’t bully the small by opposing Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine’s democracy, and reassuring our NATO allies,” he said, celebrating his alliance with Ukrainian Nazis.

Obama urged Congress to lift the trade embargo on Cuba, while Havana’s neighbor and number one ally, Venezuela, is struck with the one-two punch of U.S. sanctions and the oil glut.

He asks permission from Congress to wage a wider war against the Islamic State, whose rise is the direct result of U.S. and Saudi Arabian nurturing of the international jihadist network

for more than three decades. But, he is also training more fighters – inevitably, jihadists – to topple the secular government in Syria.

Thousands of U.S. troops now man the machinery of war in Iraq, where the U.S. was compelled to withdraw, five years ago.

Obama has no plans whatsoever to leave Afghanistan, where about 10,000 U.S. troops, largely Special Forces, remain on indefinite assignment. Yet, he begins his State of the Union address with the lie: “Tonight, for the first time since 9/11, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over.”

What is over – kaput! – is the U.S.’s ability to compete in a world that is breaking the chains of Euro-American imperial bondage. Washington can muster no response, except war. Neither can it maintain living standards for the vast majority of its own people, whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the financial ruling class to whom the Democrats and Republicans answer.

As he prepares for transition, two years from now, to more lucrative position in service of the Lords of Capital, Obama harkens back to his national television debut, at the Democratic convention, in 2004. “I gave a speech in Boston where I said there wasn’t a liberal America, or a conservative America; a black America or a white America—but a United States of America.”

He was lying back then, just as he lied Tuesday night when he promised “to reform America’s criminal justice system so that it protects and serves us all.”

So said the man who gave the final coup de grace to due process and the rule of law with his preventive detention bill, his Tuesday assassination sessions, and his ever expanding Kill List.

The State of the Union, is lethal.

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