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Why the Democrats Lost Big

The Decline of Illusion

by JEFF MACKLER

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The results are in: The Republican Party won at least seven more seats in the Senate, and now controls both houses of the U.S. Congress. *Disaster is in the making! Right?*

The Democrats and Republicans spent an unprecedented mid-term, if not all-time, election total of \$4 billion, roughly \$2 billion each. The giant corporations that footed the bills for their chosen candidates undoubtedly will get trillions of dollars in return, as is always the case in capitalist elections. The working class, which creates all wealth, will continue to pay regardless of who officially runs the country.

Indeed, working people continued to lose ground in wages and social conditions during the Obama administration's entire reign since the 2008 elections, at which time the Democrats won control of both houses. At the time, Obama won the largest percentage of the white vote ever, almost all of the votes of Blacks, and close to 86 percent of Latinos.

This year, now that his poll figures have sagged deeply, Obama was invited to stump for fellow Democrats in only a handful of locations. Speaking in Philadelphia on Nov. 1, Obama poured on the populist rhetoric, pointing out: "The biggest corporations, they don't need a champion. The wealthiest Americans don't need another champion, they're doing just fine."

But the Democratic Party candidates, Obama declared, would be the champions of working people, “the middle class,” the “hard-working single mother” and the “first-generation college student.” Is there any reason at all to believe Obama’s promises? Let’s look at the numbers:

Obama gifted only \$30 trillion or so to the corporate elite in bailouts of every sort. During 2012-13 he granted the great banks through the Federal Reserve’s “Quantitative Easing” or “economic stimuli to the rich” policy only \$89 billion per month. The same crooked banks, the largest in the country, sold the government essentially worthless mortgages. They were eventually fined several billion, a mere “slap on the wrist” fraction of what they stole. No jail for anyone! In contrast, George Bush only granted the corporate elite a mere \$1 trillion or two during his reign.

Obama’s policies brought the stock market to record highs since the economic meltdown. Ninety percent of the population was smashed, while the top ten percent flourished in the context of the largest rich-poor gap in the modern era. George Bush was a miser to the corporate elite by comparison.

Obama raised the war and surveillance budgets to record highs, today approaching \$2 trillion a year. Bush was far behind. Yet it was Obama, after all, who was elected as a “man of peace and democratic rights!”

Obama started, continued and/or secretly organized seven wars at once: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt and Ukraine, plus lots of covert wars across the globe—drone wars, death-squad privatized army wars, and more. George Bush was a pacifist by comparison.

“Champion of the working class” Obama created six million new jobs since 2009, 76 percent of which were low-wage (50-65 percent less than full time jobs), non-union, no benefit, part-time or temporary work at substandard conditions. Meanwhile, one million full-time jobs per year, largely union jobs, were offshored to distant lands to increase the super-profits of U.S. multinational corporations.

Obama reduced the official unemployment rate to slightly less than seven percent today. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn’t include in its figures the 8 million “discouraged” workers who have dropped out of the employment market. They have no work but are not “unemployed” according to the government’s number crunchers. In truth, close to 35 percent of the U.S. workforce today has no job!

Obama passed the Affordable Health Care Act, which gifted the health-care and pharmaceutical monopolies a cool trillion dollars more than they had stolen previously, while simultaneously robbing millions of union workers of health-care benefits won in struggle. Yesterday’s “Cadillac plans” have also been on Obama’s chopping block.

Obama’s promised Comprehensive Immigration Reform disappeared. In its place he deported two million immigrants, exceeding the total of all the presidents before him. He even attempted to circumvent the law that mandates that immigrants receive a fair hearing before being thrown out of the country. Here he took aim at the 50,000 children who massed at the U.S. border

believing that they could enter the U.S. to escape the U.S.-imposed poverty and exploitation of Latin America.

Obama's NSA surveillance policies and his "interpretation" of the Patriot Act made George Bush look like a civil libertarian. Bush never organized 1.3 million security-cleared NSA and other spy agency operatives to record all electronic communications of all U.S. citizens and, indeed, those of the whole world. Moreover, Obama prosecuted more people under the Patriot Act and related legislation than all previous presidents combined.

Obama is the world's number-one shale fracker, poisoning the nation's waters and raising global temperatures with abandon.

Weeks before the election, when pollsters everywhere predicted major Democratic Party defeats and loss of its Senate majority, the party's top strategists embarked on a campaign to close the gap by a massive effort to turn out Black and Latino voters.

In the Southern states that Obama won in 2008, via unprecedented Black participation, huge sums were expended in mid-October 2014 to place radio and newspaper ads in local Black community media. The ads, highlighted in a late October issue of *The New York Times*, warned that Republican victories would mean "more Fergusons" and "more Trayvon Martins," as if the nation's racist criminal justice system were restricted to police brutality, murder, and mass incarceration in the largely Republican South. Indeed, "liberal" Blue State California leads the way in these matters, perhaps second only to Texas.

Southern Republicans, the modern-day heirs to the racist Dixiecrats (Southern racist Democrats, themselves heirs to the former slave owners, Klansmen, and White Citizens Council terrorists who ruled the South after the smashing of Reconstruction) cried foul and accused the South's post Nixon-era remnant Democrats of "race-baiting."

The Democrats looked to a 2013 Census Bureau report indicating that in 2012 a higher percentage of African Americans than whites voted in a presidential election for the first time in history. This was the matchup between President Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney, in which 66 percent of eligible Blacks voted, as compared to 64.1 percent of whites. Similar statistics apply to Latino voters.

But polls before the current election predicted a significant decline in illusions in either of the two capitalist parties among oppressed nationalities. A national poll a week or so before the election recorded that the Latino voter participation would decline by at least 10 percent, with one in three Latinos stating that they knew of at least one family member or friend who had been deported—under Obama's rule. The percentage of Latinos who indicated "significant confidence" in the Democrats dropped to 14 percent.

Fully 43 percent of those who were not likely to cast ballots, according to a Pew poll a week before the election, were Hispanic, African American, or other racial and ethnic minorities,—roughly double the percentage among likely voters (22 percent).

Hoopla aside regarding any significant transformation in U.S. politics that will accompany the Republican election victory, Obama's Democratic Party strategists once again signaled that the corporate agenda would be advanced with full force. A front-page story in the Nov. 2 New York Times entitled, "Braced for a Shift in Congress, Obama Is Setting a New Agenda," reported that the president's "top aides" are "mapping possible compromises with Republicans to expand trade, overhaul taxes and build roads and bridges."

Translated to the language of the ruling class, this means further lowering wages of U.S. manufacturing workers to increase U.S. corporate competitiveness abroad, while continuing to export U.S. jobs, granting deeper tax cuts for the rich at home, and lowering corporate taxes on the trillions of dollars made abroad to encourage major monopolies like Apple Corporation to repatriate its behemoth profits with minimum taxes.

For the workers, setting aside a relative pittance to repair bridges and roads will be part of fostering the false illusion that U.S. capitalists might be considering significant government spending to create jobs.

On the Republican side, the new Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, admitted a few days before the vote that his party's pledge to repeal the Affordable Health Care Act would go nowhere—and not only because the Republicans had not achieved the required 60 Senate votes to accomplish it, or that they can utilize the special "reconciliation" procedure that requires only 51 votes, or the fact that Obama can veto any such attempt.

In truth, the year-long "debate" over this health-care legislation, which preserved and qualitatively expanded this inefficient and inadequate nearly monopolized industry, which is run for private profit of the elite insurance companies and associated financial institutions, adds additional trillions to their coffers at the expense of working people. Obama's bill, and the Republicans' too, are based not on "taxing the rich" but rather on the "Robin Hood in reverse" thesis that workers must pay.

Obama, as is expected, can technically veto any and all appeal efforts or legislation presented to him for approval. The Republicans, in turn, have their own "strategy" to supposedly advance their agenda. They intend to offer endless amendments to any "spending bills" that might secure bipartisan support. The latter are often a requirement to avoid "shutting down the government" entirely—that is, not paying federal workers on the basis that funds to do so have been withheld. This strategy was effectively employed several times over the past years.

In such circumstances the ruling rich never fail to appoint special panels of equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans to resolve supposed differences of opinion. These are the "blue ribbon" and direct representatives of the corporate elite who truly run the country. They are the bipartisan panels of capital that engage in trading billions and trillions in taxpayer dollars among themselves to advance their corporate and banking interests at the expense of the vast majority.

The same holds for the U.S. Supreme Court, the Federal Reserve, the Internal Revenue Service and all other top institutions of the capitalist state, where daily decisions are made in the exclusive interests of the ruling 0.1 percent. That was the scene in 2008 when the nation's

financial system faced imminent collapse. The top corporate and banking leaders met in private with the Treasury Secretary and the chair of the Federal Reserve to devise an unprecedented bailout, which was in a matter of a week or less, approved nearly unanimously by Congress.

The working class and its representatives are excluded from all capitalist institutions. The U.S. is an advanced capitalist state in which the fundamental institutions of corporate capital dominate public, economic, and social life in accord with their interests only.

U.S. elections, today nearly year-round propaganda vehicles for the parties of the corporate elite, are little more than orchestrated “contests” aimed at convincing the “people” that they live in a democratic society. A recent poll indicates that 60 percent of the American people prefer a new party to emerge on the political scene, presumably one that represents their interests as opposed to those who currently govern.

They increasingly understand that there are no significant differences between Republicans, with their more overt reactionary babbling Tea Party wing, and the Democrats, with their own “Blue Dog” wing advocating ideas and policies that are similar to those of right-wing Republicans. In the end, this charade that passes for politics devolves into backdoor decision-making on every critical issue, whether it be to wage yet another trillion-dollar war or to grant trillions more to this or that section of the corporate power structure.

The need has never been greater for working people to break from the parties of capital and build their own working-class political party based on a reinvigorated and fighting trade-union movement, as well as on the hundreds and millions more who will be organized in new unions, all in alliance with the oppressed nationalities, immigrants, and youth. These are the kinds of institutions that the vast majority can organize, finance, participate in, control, and use to advance their interests in the political arena.

These institutions can and must also become the political expression of a fighting working class that takes on capitalist exploitation and oppression in the workplace, in the communities, and everywhere where working people fight for their basic rights.