Written by William P. Hoar on November 22, 2022
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Pinocchio President


AP Images

Joe Biden was supposed to be the new FDR, but his pitch was *juuuuust* a bit outside: Roosevelt produced the New Deal; Biden gave us the Ordeal.

It is instructive, however, to look at how we got pitched. A straight account in the fall of 2020 would acknowledge that Joe Biden was able to win the Democratic nomination by pretending to be a moderate. Then, when that nomination was in hand, his team came up with a platform (largely overlooked by the public) that would push longtime spending by Washington to the highest levels in decades.

We sure got plenty of spending. Nonetheless, the mainstream media tried to keep up the pretense of Bidenesque restraint.

For instance, *Time's* gushing cover story ("A Time to Heal") in November of 2020 still threw junk, with post-election rhetorical curves and knucklers to keep us off balance. It's hard to stomach the serving of the supposed "promise of decency, unity and national unity"; the "steadfast deliberation of a man who knows who he is and what America needs"; and assurances "to govern with compassion, to provide experience in a time of crisis, to 'restore the soul of the nation.'"

By the end of 2022, Biden — and his economy in particular — is not hitting homers. Indeed (to mix metaphors), Americans are seeing that no one is his equal in hitting a nail squarely on the thumb.

And it hurts.

Inflation is crippling; spending and taxation are out of control; the nation's borders are effectively open; onerous government regulations are rampant; deficits and debt are soaring; and our energy is spluttering.

As the midterm voting approached, even the left-wing *New York Times* was acknowledging the president had been making a number of claims about the economy that are not true — albeit, with a major understatement, putting this down to his regular habit of "embellishing the truth."

Shortly after the voting, Biden acknowledged that he planned to do "nothing" differently during the second half of his term.

What Happens When You Increase the Money Supply?

Readers don't need experts to confirm the pain being imposed on them and the economy in general. You can feel it every day. After all, as Heritage Foundation economist E.J. Antoni has put it, "There's no way you can get away with printing trillions and trillions of dollars and not expect severe consequences." You get inflation, with too many dollars chasing too few goods.

Indeed, Antoni has calculated that the average American has lost the equivalent of $4,200 in annual income under the Biden administration because of inflation and higher interest rates. It only took President Biden 18 months to manage, says Antoni, “to push inflation to over 9% and prices were rising nearly as fast in a single month as they did in the entire year before Biden took office.” When Biden came into office, as Antoni notes, the economy was growing at a $1.5 trillion annualized rate. In just a year, the policies of the Biden administration caused the economy to shrink, contracting in the first six months of 2022 (the traditional definition of a recession).

Intentional: The administration has been assaulting fossil fuels as well as depleting the nation’s reserves for political reasons. Meanwhile, the so-called Inflation Reduction Act served as a Trojan horse for “clean energy” subsidies. Such policies have cost the economy an estimated $100 billion a year. Elevated gasoline prices are shown in June 2022 in Los Angeles. (AP Images)

While the president has claimed, duplicitously, that he is “rebuilding the economy in a responsible way” where “everyone does well,” he is doing more than “embellishing.” Try telling that, writes Kelly Sadler of the *Washington Times*, to the bottom 90 percent of households “who had their debt increase by $300 billion over the last year, the largest annual gain on record. Or those workers saving for retirement, whose average 401(k) plan lost $34,000 — or more than 25% — in one year.”

She rightfully observes that the economy is

> not doing “well” for homeowners who have seen monthly home price declines already matching the pace during the worst of the subprime crisis of 2008. Or for potential new homeowners who now have to pay 7.2% interest rates on a 30-year mortgage, a 22-year high.
>
> The average family has lost $6,000 in annual wages due to soaring inflation on Mr. Biden’s watch, and 61% are living paycheck to paycheck. Twenty million U.S. households have fallen behind on their utility bills, and this winter’s heating oil prices are expected to spike 19% from last winter.

Yet Joe insists that the economy is “strong as hell.” An accurate fact-checker might call that assertion “partly true” — the latter part.

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Self-defeating Assault on Domestic Energy

Biden, both before and after he entered the White House, made no bones about his opposition to fossil fuels. More recently, as *The Wall Street Journal* has noted, the White House has been blaming the industry for high gasoline prices while it does everything it can to make drilling more difficult. The complaint is that profits are being prioritized over people. Yet, as the editors explain, "companies must consider their long-term return on investment. The Biden policies have created substantial regulatory uncertainty, raised production costs, and directed capital to green energy."

A new study by the Committee to Unleash Prosperity, by economists Stephen Moore and Casey Mulligan, has concluded that the United States would be producing between two and three million more barrels of oil a day and between 20 and 25 billion more cubic feet of natural gas under the previous Trump policies. This translates, says the study, "into an economic loss — or tax on the American economy — of roughly $100 billion a year."

As their study emphasizes:

> Biden has promised to set the U.S. on a course of eliminating U.S. oil and gas over the next two decades. He has said that his long-term goal would be to "shut down" oil and gas production as part of his climate change strategy. He has also canceled pipelines, reduced drilling on public lands, and instituted tough new environmental standards that raise the cost of drilling. His new climate change legislation imposes new taxes on the oil and gas industry.

As Robert Louis Stevenson once put it, "Everybody, sooner or later, sits down to a banquet of consequences." In this case, to our sorrow, we are in line to get a high-priced starvation diet of unreliable energy.

There is, of course, a way out. We could stop the war against our resources and produce more domestic oil — but that would hurt the feelings of the progressives helping to pull Biden's strings. The president, meanwhile, has been blaming high gas prices on a succession of scapegoats — from the Saudis to the war in Ukraine. But our energy ills are not, largely, the fault of Putin — rather of putrid energy policies.

Back in September of 2019, recounts Mohammed Alyahya (a fellow at the Harvard Belfer Center's Middle East Initiative), the United States became

> a net exporter of crude oil and petroleum products for the first time since such records have been kept. In 2020 America exported still more oil, with investment in domestic pipelines, refineries and extraction technologies and resulting employment all reaching new highs. But in 2021 America began importing much larger amounts of crude oil than it produced. In 2022 the U.S. will again be a net oil importer. In less than two years, investment in the domestic American oil industry has collapsed, U.S. refining capacity has atrophied, and the jobs that investment produced have largely vanished.

According to Alyahya, who is also a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, the causes of this reversal, "which left the U.S. dependent on imported oil at a dangerous geopolitical moment,"

> aren't a mystery. In the 2020 election, American politicians, from Joe Biden down, ran and won on a set of policies intended to wean the American economy off fossil fuels in favor of so-called clean energy. These policies included bans on fracking, bans on drilling, closing down the Keystone Pipeline and other infrastructure built to serve future energy needs, and subsidizing alternative energy, such as solar, and electric cars.

"Clean" or "green" energy, one discovers, has a big undeclared price tag. We are just starting to recognize that.

The progressive/Biden goal is to generate an incredible 80 percent of electricity in this country from wind, solar, and other renewables, "reduce economy-wide carbon emissions by 50%, and boost EV sales to half of all cars sold by 2030," as summarized by Peter Morici, an economist and business professor emeritus at the University of Maryland.

Biden, digging himself a deeper political hole less than a week before the midterm elections, charged that coal plants in this country are too expensive and too unreliable and will be replaced with renewable energy. We are, emphasized the president, "going to be shutting these [coal] plants down all across America and having wind and solar power." Yelps of protest ensued, and the White House tried to put up a smokescreen over what the president clearly said.

For the record, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), as measured in quadrillions of British thermal units, these are the leading sources of U.S. energy: natural gas (35.4); crude oil (23.2); coal (11.6); nuclear (8.1); natural gas plant liquids (7.1); biomass (5.0); wind (3.3); hydro (conventional hydroelectric) (2.3); other (geothermal and solar) (1.7). The president is dismissive of about 577 million short tons of coal that were (as of 2021) produced in 21 U.S. states.

Exploding Spending, Borrowing

When you are spending like a deranged creature, how do you cover up the tracks? Lying helps. Or you can just brag about what you are doing and hope that nobody understands what's going on. Which brings us to the Biden administration's policies on federal spending and deficits.

Brian Riedl, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, has summarized the major "accomplishments" of the Biden gang. At inauguration, he noted, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) forecast "a $14.5 trillion in deficits between 2021 and 2031. Now Washington is projected to borrow $19 trillion over that period." Biden has added, writes Riedl in the *New York Post*,

> $4.8 trillion in 10-year deficits through policies such as the American Rescue Plan ($1.9 trillion), student-loan moratoria and bailouts ($750 billion), a large omnibus appropriations bill ($625 billion), infrastructure law ($370 billion), health and welfare expansions ($360 billion) and a veterans' bill ($280 billion). The only law providing net savings was the Inflation Reduction Act ($240 billion), and that figure is inflated with gimmicks like fake expiration dates for spending intended to be permanent.

That was just part of the legerdemain.

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Implausibly, Biden boasted about the size of the deficit drop. However, as Riedl commented acerbically, you really "don't win firefighting awards for putting out your own fire." As he explained,

> Taking credit for 2022's "largest one-year drop" in the deficit is especially galling when Biden himself drastically expanded the 2021 deficit with the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, which is worsening inflation. He personally drove up the 2021 budget deficit and then bragged about his fiscal responsibility when that spending expired on schedule.

Moreover, Biden did not stress, as *The Wall Street Journal* put it (likening him to "Rumpelstiltskin"), the "savings" came not from exercising spending restraint, but from "the expiration of pandemic emergency programs — some of which he wants to extend forever."

Adding more context to the president's dissembling is Jeffrey Anderson of the American Main Street Initiative, who has noted that the deficit in 2022 is the sixth-highest on record (in inflation-adjusted dollars). Apparently, there is a steep premium to "restore the soul of the nation."

Opening Borders for Illegals; Regulating Citizens

Biden's "secure" border: A record 5.5 million illegal aliens have crossed U.S. borders since Biden took office. The administration, nonetheless, insists that "the border is secure." Migrants are seen above (in May 2022) crossing the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, Texas. (AP Images)

You get the point: If you give the president a free hand, he'll stick it right into your pocket. This government overreach costs all of us in manifold ways. It adds up. In just the first quarter of 2022, according to the CBO, the wealth of American households plummeted an astounding $2.4 trillion.

Adding to our economic woes, the Biden administration has thrown open our sovereign borders for millions of illegal immigrants — some bringing in drugs, many coming for welfare-state goodies, and unknown scores infiltrating with terrorist intentions — even as the regulatory bureaucracy has targeted American businesses and the nation at large.

As to the latter, perhaps the best source is Clyde Wayne Crews, Jr., vice president for policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) and the author of the annual "Ten Thousand Commandment" reports. According to Crews, there has been "a radical shift in the nation's regulatory agencies," which he documents in his reports on Washington's "hidden tax" burden. Biden scrapped Trump's reforms, notes Crews, "and replaced that with 'whole-of-government' progressive goals in 'competition policy' and antitrust, climate policy, Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and 'equity,' digital currency, and other issues."

Crews says it has been difficult to uncover the extent of Biden's regulatory plans. Reports Crews, it "turns out" that the new rules "are on the newer white-paper compilation charts. While the online database shows 3,257 rules, the document count in the newer roundup is 4,429, a 45.8 percent increase."

All of this will increase the cost of doing business. At the same time, millions are streaming across the border. Many claim to be asylum-seekers, but others are violent criminals, drug-smugglers, and terrorists. Adding insult to this injury, the president (and Vice President Harris, the supposed border "czar") insists that our southern border is "secure" — while it clearly isn't.

"No, the border is not secure," as Representative Henry Cuellar (D-Texas) recently told *Fox News Sunday*. "When you had 1.7 million individuals last year, and now another 2.7 [million], that's over 4.5 million individuals encountered at the border. Plus, if you add the getaways, that's going to be over 5 million individuals in just two years."

That's not an exaggeration. The Biden administration in mid-October released illegal immigration data for fiscal year 2022. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) has summarized some of the official numbers. Reports FAIR:

> Some 2.7 million migrants — those who illegally entered or were otherwise inadmissible at a port of entry — were encountered at our borders in FY 2022.
>
> 2.2 million of them were apprehended along the southwest border, setting a new record and eclipsing all four years of the Trump administration combined.
>
> Since President Biden took office, around 5.5 million illegal aliens have crossed our borders — a crisis of epic proportions.

Agents from the Border Patrol reported that they encountered, reports FAIR, "98 known or suspected terrorists in FY 2022. In FY 2021, that number was 15. In FY 2020, it was three and in FY 2019, zero." The performance of the current administration is — purposely — getting worse. Even *The Wall Street Journal* (generally dovish on immigration issues) has acknowledged,

> About 19% of migrants apprehended in September were repeat offenders, meaning they had been encountered at least once in the previous 12 months. This reflects that the border is so porous that migrants will keep coming even if they are arrested once or more. They know they'll get through sooner or later.

This is another new Biden record. As usual, it's not a good one.

When you add up the overall Biden economic record to date, you see that he is right in one regard. Thanks to him and his team, when the president claims that nation's economy is looking up, it is only because it is flat on its back.