**The real distancing**

BY KURT JACOBSEN & SAYEED HASAN KHAN 2020-11-17

BE jubilant, but keep it short. Donald Trump clings to the White House but it`s a pretty good bet that he will depart, kicking and tweeting, on Jan 20. He nonetheless garnered 72 million votes, so his long-anticipated exit may not be permanent. The Democratic Party failed to cut into his support because they were loath to say one word that smacked of the visionary aspirations of FDR`s New Deal or LBJ`s Great Society, regarded as hideously socialist by their big donors.

Wall Street injected millions of dollars into Joe Biden`s campaign, and awaits cabinet appointments and more, which will be duly granted given that some 40 former lobbyists populate his transition team. So we are a long way from Biden posing credibly as a humble man of the people. It was truly bizarre listening to af fluent Democrats dismiss Bernie Sanders as not a `real` party member when he and Elizabeth Warren were the only candidates who stuck to the values of traditional FDR Democrats.

After fending off the left-liberal platforms of Sanders and Warren, complacent Democrat officials are determined to revert to the same stale economic policies that bred Trump`s resistible rise to power in the first place. Throughout his lacklustre campaign, Biden avidly played the Covid-19 card of extreme lockdown, pleasing perhaps a third of the populace who can afford a Zoom lifestyle but f ar less so a hard-pressed majority who plead that the economy (ie jobs, wages, small businesses and housing stability) is their foremost worry.

Lockdown proponents like to claim that disobeying their rules means you will murder your granny. They don`t like to hear that lockdowns mean condemning multitudes to poverty, homelessness and early deaths (from untreated illnesses) in order to protect their privileged selves. The anti-Covid measures in the US simply managed to shif t the risks from the upper class to the poor, and is no small part of the reason for the boosted Trump vote. A loss of seats in the house and an inability to gain a Senate majority should alert the Democratic Party lords that something essential is missing in their economic programmes, but all they do is blame the left for their own shortcomings.

Biden`s popularity was only modestly higher than Trump`s. The bulk of Democrats voted for Biden out of distaste for Trump, not enthusiasm for he who has little to of fer those outside his high-income social orbit.

Biden has a track record any conservative can cherish servant of the credit card industry in his home state of Delaware, passing a 2005 law stripping people of bankruptcy relief; tormentor of Anita Hillduring a 1991 supreme court nomination event, installing a judge who became a reliable rubber stamp for reactionary views; pushing a 1994 crime bill that sent the incarceration of minorities skyrocketing; and blithely of fering several times, including as Obama`s vice president, to slash social security and Medicare to make foolish compromises with crafty Republicans.

Biden`s good manners will be a relief, but only for a short spell.

Kamala Harris praised Biden for his `audacity` in choosing her as running mate when nothing was more obvious than the c areful political calculations involve d in the choice. In mainstream US politics, `identities`of race, creed, ethnicity and gender are are allowed to flourish instead of class interests, which are not supposed to exist. One hopes that Harris` shattering of race and gender barriers puts those symbolic goals behind us, because Obama`s presidency gave black voters who weren`t already prosperous nothing but a vicarious thrill. Cannyelites can always pick useful opportunists to do their bidding, on the assumption that all that people crave is to become part of the establishment.

Too often, they`re right about that.

Harris is a dedicated careerist whoplayed her cards right as a public prosecutor with a merciless approach to the poor, even threatening to jail parents of truant children.

The US isn`t centre-right, but the people who run it are. An NYT poll attests twothirds of US citizens want a wealth tax, national healthcare, free college tuition and a Green New Deal, just for starters. A recent Fox News poll put those figures even higher.

Biden and Harris became Democratic candidates because they are `safe hands` who enable Wall Street, mega corporations, and too-big-to-fail banks to go on bilking average citizens. The top 10 per cent in the US now own 78pc of the wealth. At this rate, the top 10pc should own everything in another lifetime, but something has to give.

The real social distancing that the US has practised since the 1970s is the ever-yawning gap between the wealthy and the rest.

Biden is by no means a remedy, unless the social justice movements arising during Trump`s era pressure him ever so reluctantly into the role.  The writers are the authors of No C|ean H and s andParables of Permanent War.