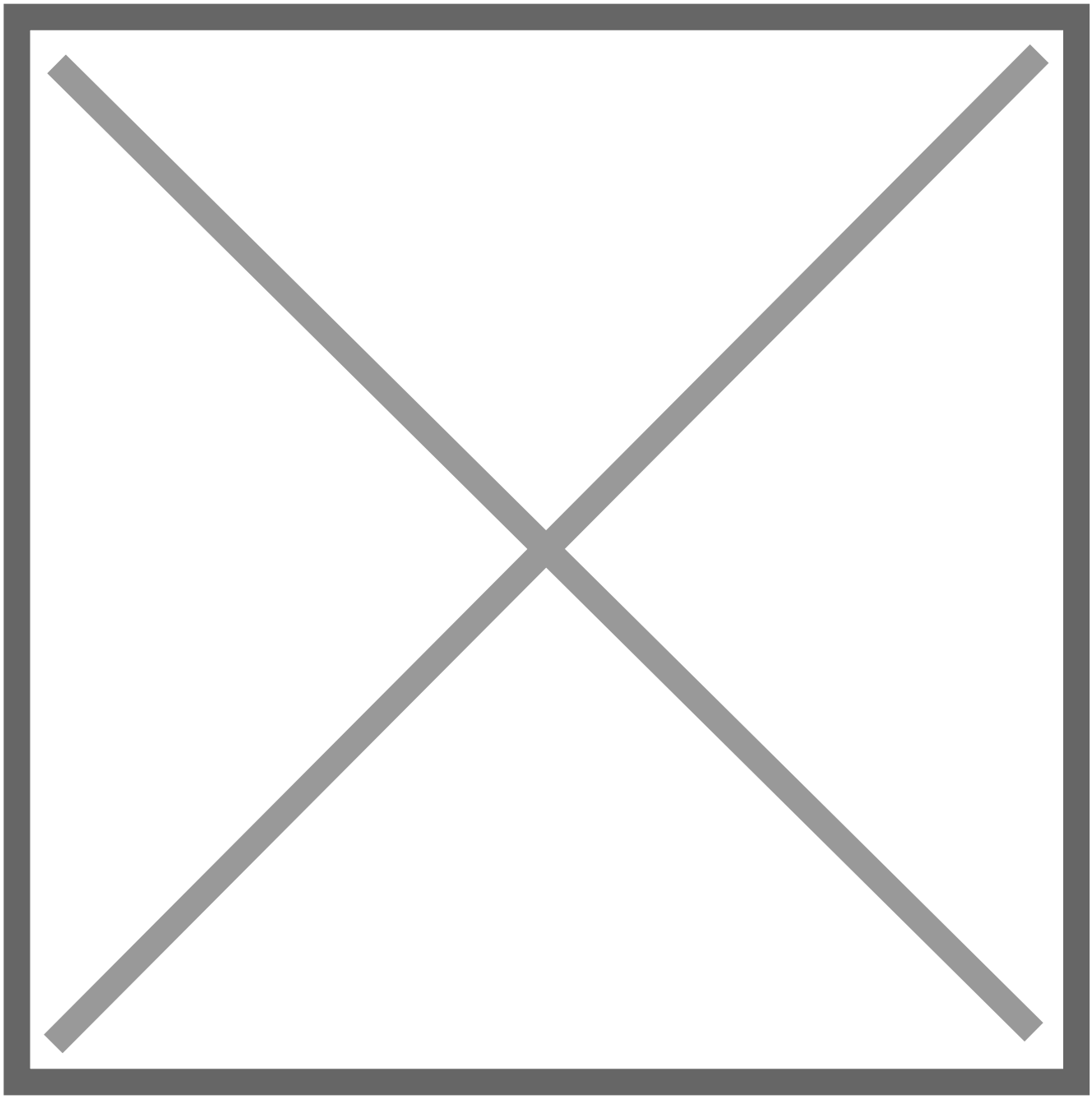
Opinion
News



Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives take their oath of office on the floor of the House Chamber during the first session of the 117th Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington Jan. 3. (CNS/Reuters/Joshua Roberts)



by Michael Sean Winters

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Is there a reason we are not using words like "Vichyite" and "Quisling" to describe the stance of those Republican members of Congress who plan to support these ridiculous challenges to the election results? I anticipated some Republican members of the House backing this seditious lunacy, but senators? CNN has the list. Most are from states where they will not pay a price for this, but Sen. Ron Johnson is asking that the voters of Wisconsin be disenfranchised and he faces those same voters in 2022. I hope they remember.

I have never been shy about my admiration for Sen. Elizabeth Warren. But this article at Politico makes me wonder to whom she is talking as she charts a course for progressive policy. I applaud her for working with Senate Democratic leaders, for playing the inside game not the outside/Twitter game, but since when does someone as smart as Warren not see the political danger of leading with student loan forgiveness at a time when millions of Americans are terrified of being evicted? And since when does she repeat cliches with Stalinist roots and overtones like "right side of history"? Progressives need Warren to be focusing like a laser on income inequality, her strong suit, as the nation rebuilds a post-pandemic economy.

Newsweek reports that 20 states raised the minimum wage effective Jan. 1, and another two states have raises coming later this year. Progressive economic policies are wildly popular in both blue and red states, and if President-elect Joe Biden makes

such policies the centerpiece of his first 100 days, he will build a governing coalition.

Relatedly, The Washington Post reports on Wall Street having a banner year and some of the richest people in American making billions more. Meanwhile, millions of Americans are struggling, many are facing hunger for the first time, others facing eviction. People will be reaching for their pitchforks if the incoming administration and Congress do not do more to salvage the real economy, and fund the necessary changes with taxes that hit the totally artificial profits generated by the financial sector, all of them predicated on nothing more than a guess about future earnings or generated by usury. As for Mr. Jeff Bezos, if Democrats do not break up Amazon in the next two years, they will have failed the American people.

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Thumbs down to the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, which rang in the new year with scab musicians for their virtual gala. The American Federation of Musicians, the union I joined on my 16th birthday so I could join the local swing band (second trombone!), issued a statement that read, in part: "The deepest offense any artistic institution can make is the choice to attack its own artists. Let's be clear: hiring non-Met musicians under the banner of the Metropolitan Opera and outsourcing the orchestra's work is an attack on the Met as an artistic institution and an insult to the very artists who work there. The Met is still the only major American orchestra that has furloughed and not paid its musicians or given them any kind of substantial financial aid or lifeline during the pandemic." Peter Gelb and the rest of the management team should be ashamed of themselves.

Speaking of opera, and as a last Christmas gift to readers, one of the recordings I stumbled across over the holidays has moved me more than any other: Montserrat Caballé, as Queen Elizabeth, singing a 21-second pianissimo that floats above the entire chorus (starts at 2:49 minute mark) in Donizetti's "Roberto Devereux." It is not only the amazing breath control. It is the lusciousness of the voice. I remember the first time I heard her voice and said, "Wow." It was her recording of Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera." Her rendition of "Morro, ma prima in grazia" is justly famous, and it was that song which, upon hearing, caused Freddie Mercury to seek her out, leading to a great friendship and collaboration. But what I heard first was the earlier aria, " Ma dall'arido stelo divulsa." Just miraculous.

It looks like none of us will be traveling much this year, but thank God for outlets like Smithsonian Magazine that offer some virtual travel options. They have just posted a virtual tour of the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome, which is apparently the largest circular tomb in the world. I have walked past it a dozen times — it is near the Ara Pacis, and there used to be a great little restaurant called Cinquenta Nove up that way. Soon, visitors to Rome, yours truly included, will be able to visit this ancient wonder.