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Trump's Worst Collusion Isn't With Russia — It's With Corporations

By Peter Certo

July 13, 2017

I've always been a little skeptical that there'd be a smoking gun about the Trump campaign's alleged collusion with Russia. The latest news about Donald Trump, Jr., however, is tantalizingly close.

The short version of the story, revealed by emails the *New York Times* obtained, is that the president's eldest son was offered "some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary" and "would be very useful to your father."

More to the point, the younger Trump was *explicitly* told this was "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." Donald, Jr.'s reply? "I love it."

Trump Jr. didn't just host that meeting at Trump Tower. He also brought along campaign manager Paul Manafort and top Trump confidante (and son-in-law) Jared Kushner.

We still don't have evidence they coordinated with Russian efforts to release Clinton campaign emails, spread "fake news," or hack state voting systems. But at the very least, the top members of Trump's inner circle turned up to get intelligence they *knew* was part of a foreign effort to meddle in the election.

Some in Washington are convinced they've heard enough already, with Virginia senator (and failed VP candidate) Tim Kaine calling the meeting "treason."

Perhaps. But it's worth asking: Who's done the real harm here? Some argue it's not the Russians after all.

"The effects of the crime are undetectable," the legendary social critic Noam Chomsky says of the alleged Russian meddling, "unlike the massive effects of interference by corporate power and private wealth."

That's worth dwelling on.

Many leading liberals *suspect*, now with a little more evidence, that Trump worked with Russia to win his election. But we've long *known* that huge corporations and wealthy individuals threw their weight behind the billionaire.

That gambit's paying off far more handsomely for them — and more destructively for the rest of us — than any scheme by Putin.

The evidence is hiding in plain sight.

The top priority in Congress right now is to move a health bill that would gut Medicaid and throw at least 22 million Americans off their insurance — while loosening regulations on insurance companies and cutting taxes on the wealthiest by over \$346 billion.

As few as 12 percent of Americans support that bill, but the allegiance of its supporters isn't to voters — it's plainly to the wealthy donors who'd get those tax cuts.

Meanwhile, majorities of Americans in *every single* congressional district support efforts to curb local pollution, limit carbon emissions, and transition to wind and solar. And majorities in *every single state* back the Paris climate agreement.

Yet even as scientists warn large parts of the planet could soon become uninhabitable, the fossil fuel-backed Trump administration has put a climate denier in charge of the EPA, pulled the U.S. out of Paris, and signed legislation to let coal companies dump toxic ash in local waterways.

Meanwhile, as the administration escalates the unpopular Afghan war once again, Kushner invited billionaire military contractors — including Blackwater founder Erik Prince — to advise on policy there.

Elsewhere, JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon and other architects of the housing crash are advising Trump on financial deregulation, while student debt profiteers set policy at the Department of Education.

Chomsky complains that *this* sort of collusion is often “not considered a crime but the normal workings of democracy.” While Trump has taken it to new heights, it’s certainly a bipartisan problem.

If Trump’s people did work with Russia to undermine our vote, they should absolutely be held accountable. But the politicians leading the charge don’t have a snowball’s chance of redeeming our democracy unless they’re willing to take on the corporate conspirators much closer to home.