

# From the Editors

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PESSIMISM AND OPTIMISM vie for our feelings as we survey the world and national scene. We are deeply disheartened by the continuing reports on climate change, driven largely by the coal and oil industries, most recently a report on the catastrophic rate of the decline of living species. Failing to deal with that crisis, President Donald Trump threatens war with Iran, which could once more bring destruction to another Middle Eastern nation and death to tens of thousands. Things look dark ...

... but then the sun shines through the clouds. We cheer the radical upheavals that have overthrown the dictators Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria and Omar al-Bashir in Sudan. And we are both beguiled and bewildered by the Yellow Vest movement in France—hairdressers, plumbers, retirees, and the unemployed—that has for half a year now thrown a wrench into President Emmanuel Macron’s neoliberal machine. And just when we think the climate situation is hopeless, 16-year-old Greta Thunberg leads hundreds of thousands of European youth in school strikes and street protests to demand better environmental policies now.

Here at home, Trump, the Republican Senate, and the Supreme Court are largely succeeding in taking away the rights of immigrants, workers, women, and LGBT people ... but then rank and file teachers, mostly women, rise up and strike in states across the country and win improvements in wages, health care, and working conditions. And as we approach the 2020 elections, Bernie Sanders continues to call himself a socialist—defined as a New Deal liberal—and to call for a “political revolution,” while the Democratic establishment plots the counter-revolution. Meanwhile some 22 other Democratic Party candidates, from Sanders look-alikes such as Elizabeth Warren, to the boring John Hickenlooper and to the bizarre Marianne Williamson, promise to oust Trump and take us back to the future.

In the context of this current, hypercharged social and political uncertainty, the present issue of *New Politics* aims at providing some clarity and direction for the left’s forces in the battles to come.

Two articles here discuss American politics, the Democratic Party, and Bernie. Sarah Mason and Robert Cavooris ask what’s beyond Bernie, and Tyler Zimmer raises the important question of whether a revolutionary rupture with capitalism is possible.

In our section on “Turmoil in Europe,” completed before Theresa May’s resignation, Neil Davidson and David Black examine the British political debate over Brexit, while Patrick Le Tréhondat analyzes the Yellow Vest movement in France.

Three articles in this issue discuss other international questions. Michael Pröbsting describes twenty-first century imperialism and argues that it is still about Great Power rivalry. Michael Karadjis discusses Syria in light of Trump’s withdrawal and the Gulf states’ rapprochement with dictator Bashar al-Assad. Tariq Kenney-Shawa directs our attention to the role and position of Palestinian youth in the next stage of resistance.

And we don’t neglect socialist history and theory. Helen Scott, Nancy Holmstrom, and Alyssa Adamson examine different facets of the life and thought of Rosa Luxemburg. Edward Tapia takes up a classic issue of Marxist economics, the tendency of the rate of profit to decline, and tells us why it matters. And finally, Gerald Coles reexamines and places in historical context the long American debate about phonics in the teaching of reading.

In our book review section, Lois Weiner examines the teachers' strikes in red states. Temma Kaplan takes up the important *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*. Anna McClennen discusses why we need socialist disability theory and critical disability socialism. And Paul Buhle remembers some New England anarchists.

Let our optimism triumph over our pessimism, our hope over our fear, and having read this issue, let's all—at least in our minds—put on our yellow vests and in fact take to the streets in solidarity with the people of Algeria and Sudan, joining with the teachers, and taking the side of the immigrants, waving our rainbow flags. We can begin by joining the worldwide climate strikes—the children are asking the adults to join them. While it will be a long hard fight, it should also be fun whenever we can make it so. So, we think of writer Lewis Carroll, whose fictional hero took up his “vorpal sword” and, “snicker-snack,” went forth and slew “the Jabberwock.” So we must go forth to slay the Jabberwock of capitalism.

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