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## ‘A Work For the World and For Us’

### Editorial Introduction

Carlo Fanelli<sup>1</sup> and Garry Potter<sup>2</sup>

A spectre is haunting . . . not only Europe but the world. However, we cannot now write with the same degree of confidence as did the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*. While we reject the teleology inherent in a literal interpretation of that work and conclude that Marx and Engels meant their assertion of revolution’s inevitability more as an exhortation than as any assertion of fact, they nonetheless seemed very confident in the future. We cannot look at the world situation today and find too much in the way of rational grounds for such optimism. For that we must adopt Gramsci’s maxim of pessimism of intellect but optimism of will. The spectre of social justice today is pale and ethereal but nonetheless real. Our hope and will are conjoined. As both intellectuals and activists we hold onto another of Gramsci’s maxims: to tell the truth is revolutionary. We believe there is much knowledge and truth in this journal issue, most particularly about social inequality and its multiple registers of oppression.

Much time has passed since the revolutions of 1848 but social inequality is still structurally central to our socio-economic system and growing even more extreme. Three men – Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet – together hold wealth equal to that of half of the population of the United States. If we add Amancio Ortega, Carlos Slim, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison and

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Michael Bloomberg to the previous three, we then find that these eight men control wealth equal to that of the poorer half of the world (Curtin, 2017). The 2018 World Inequality Report provides considerable empirical evidence for some fundamental conclusions. First, inequality levels differ enormously by region and country. Secondly, the degree of inequality has risen sharply from the 1980s to the present. These two conclusions provide support for an even more basic conclusion: governmental policy can profoundly affect the degree of inequality found in societies, either exacerbating it, as they predict will occur if current policies and trends continue into the future, or reducing it if governments pursue some reformist measures.

This is where from our point of view, the pale spectre of social justice sits at the fulcrum of the axis of the pessimism of hard analysis and the hope for something better than that. Essentially, the authors of the World Inequality Report offer us a political prescription of government investment and taxation measures, educational access measures and so on, following a comparative modelling of European versus American political economic trajectories over the last few decades. The European way would decrease future inequality, the American way would increase it. They do not mention either Keynes or Friedman in this regard but that is basically what it boils down to. But is a small return to Keynesianism even possible, let alone the best we can hope for?

Even if true on one level, that best would simply not be good enough; not if we admit environmental materiality into the economic abstractions. Moderate reform measures will not stave off climate change and other environmental disasters. Moreover, at the core of Keynes' intellectual project was an attempt to rescue capitalism, not surmount it – that is to say, Keynes sought to preserve and not upend antagonistic class relations and their particularities of race, gender, ethnicity and so forth. While some sought to 'radicalize' Keynes in the aftermath of the Great Recession, we take the view here that Keynes stopped short of recognizing the ways in which state power structures reinforced and solidified capitalist class exploitation at the expense of labour, in the process strengthening market-like rule. In other words, juxtaposing (more) state against (less) market presumes that the state is a class-neutral arbiter that exists independent of the capital-labour relationship (Fanelli, 2015).

Far from three worlds of welfare capitalism, 'the country that is more developed industrially only shows,' as Marx put it, 'to the less developed, the image of its own future.' Thus, rather than decommodifying social relations, the

Keynesian welfare state further embedded commodification helping to lay the basis for the rise of neoliberalism and subsequent turn to more overtly ‘authoritarian’ measures that continue to deepen and extend the marketization of all spheres of social life. Even though the Left has seldom been more fractured and weaker; even though we see a slide into the mainstream by the far Right; still, we do not see it as helpful to repeat the political analytical mistakes of an earlier era; the problem is not neoliberalism, it is capitalism.

We saw this error occur through the 1980s as a good many intellectuals, including Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques and Eric Hobsbawm, came to embrace a tawdry reformism in the UK Labour Party because of their analysis of “Thatcherism.” We can look back now with near universal disdain upon that dreadful little book of Anthony Giddens’ *The Third Way*, and the Labour Party’s transformation from a social democratic party to enthusiastic neoliberal one. The same is true in the Canadian context as New Democratic Parties came to embrace a ‘new’ *Social Democracy Without Illusions* that called for ‘harnessing the market to social ends’ (Richards et al., 1991). This rediscovered third way was motivated by a claim that social democracy faced new conditions and challenges, not the least of which was stateless capital and powerless states under the auspices of globalization, and each new strategy was portrayed as the best way forward given the new constraints and opportunities (Evans and Schmidt, 2012). Under this process of neoliberal convergence labour was now treated as just another “interest group” jockeying for influence over public policy. Although formal institutional linkages with organized labour still remained, it was now devoid of political content; what others have referred to as “contentless populism” (Bradford and Jenson, 1991) or “reformism without reform” (McBride, 2005). Perhaps ironically, it is in today’s Corbynist UK Labour Party where we can find signs of renewed hope.

However, while inequality levels are susceptible to change arising from even moderate reform measures – and we are certainly completely in favour of such being enacted wherever possible – the very existence of inequality is not contingent in this manner: it is a fundamental feature of capitalism. Sitting on the political sidelines is no longer an option, indeed for many it never has been. As has often been noted, arguing from a neutral or supposed objective position reinforces the status quo. One of the great ironies with the turn to authoritarian neoliberalism (Albo and Fanelli, 2014) has been the radical Right’s usurpation of historical demands raised by the Left, not uncontroversially and often for different reasons, including demands for national self-sufficiency and self-

governance, protection of free speech, anti-globalization and anti-elitism, opposition to “the system” and claims to speak for “common people.” Liberal neutrality also has very little to say about addressing group, let alone class, disadvantages, and fails to consider the ways in which state institutions and laws underwrite and enforce the structural power of the ruling class, deepening and extending existing inequalities of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and so forth. In this regard, the spectre of social justice is a presence and possibility, and because it aims to upend existing inequalities in all their forms, it remains a threat that haunts the nightmares of elites the world over. This hope for a better, fairer world has guided the production of the various articles found in this issue.

Leading us off, Duffy and Pupo contend that women’s unpaid, socially necessary reproductive work has grown in the context of ever-more unstable and insecure work arrangements. This is especially reflected in the spread of unpaid internships and unremunerated working days, which has dramatically intensified patterns of exploitation. Situated historically, women’s unpaid labour has buffeted unequal economic arrangements, while providing a reserve army of labour; this is not a byproduct of agent-less globalization, but part and parcel of capitalism and the relations of ruling that sustain them. Next, Mandell et al., show how the percentage of the elderly poor has begun to rise in Canada, with single elderly women and older immigrants with limited familial supports representing the most vulnerable. Rising poverty is associated with shorter average life spans, and greater risk of illness and disability, more family stress and greater physical, psychological and social illness. In an era where economic vulnerability and inequality continue to grow, Mandell and authors examine what the short and long-term consequences will be for society when inequality continues to grow leaving a large majority of Canadians “unequal to the end.”

Moreno and co-authors follow this up with an article exploring immigrant settlement and integration services through state and non-governmental organizational (NGO) ‘partnerships’ across fourteen countries. As noted elsewhere (Fanelli et al., 2017), at the core of these partnerships are increasing tensions related to the preservation of programs in the face of neoliberal restructuring, as well as the undermining of nonprofit advocacy out of fear of government funding loss. Despite these challenges, Moreno et al. show how many NGOs continue to emphasize a social justice mission that promotes an active advocacy agenda premised on building community relationships that value social and cultural differences and opposes social inequality. In what follows, Amy Cohen and Susana Caxaj discuss women migrant farmworkers and

their struggles for reproductive sovereignty in British Columbia. As they explain, little is known about women's reproductive health and the experiences of sexual exploitation under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program (SAWP). Based on a review of federal and provincial healthcare policies, including qualitative interviews and fieldwork, Cohen and Caxaj reveal the ways in which female SAWP workers' sexuality is restricted and controlled via legal and extra-legal means. Cohen and Caxaj conclude with a call to expand the movement for reproductive justice for migrant women, beginning with the acts of resistance already taking place on-the-ground, and extending these to broader struggles for migrants' rights.

Following this, Ruth Cross and Louise Warwick-Booth explore UK policymakers' efforts to fund early interventions for so-called vulnerable young women. The authors conducted focus groups with women who had participated in the intervention to determine the impact it has had on their own lives. Cross and Warwick-Booth show how such interventionist programs guide young women towards an individualized, self-regulatory, normative sense of successful selfhood that resonates with neoliberalism, thereby reinforcing hegemonic gendered identities and existing structural inequalities. Next, Chapman and co-authors "make the case for a program of critical studies devoted to analyzing the features, sources, institutional carriers and uses of the concept of global citizenship as neoliberal propaganda serving to mystify young people's understanding of their place in the world." Their analysis is based on two case studies of the concept's use with regards to international service/experiential learning and the existential conditions of the US/Mexican border in the form of dehumanized and racialized Latinx bodies.

Finally, Bern Baldus contends that current theoretical discussions of the causes of social inequality still rely largely on frameworks first formulated in the 19th century by Marx, Spencer and Durkheim. Baldus examines elements in the causation, maintenance and change of inequality structures which are rarely discussed: the role of luck and chance in the growth of inequality, the self-reinforcing dynamics and processes of social control which can consolidate it over time even if its consequences are harmful to the majority of people affected, and its irregular historical pathways. These elements also suggest the need to explore more egalitarian forms of distribution and options for social change and social justice.

A series of Interventions further confront issues of social inequality and social justice. Bob Jessop suggests that Marx's analysis of capitalism was far more

than simply one of his own time but of the future, “the basic mechanisms, tendencies, counter-tendencies, contradictions, and social antagonisms that still shape capital accumulation and bourgeois societalization at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” As Jessop notes, via Marx, the more integrated the world market becomes, the less scope there is to resolve crises by extending capitalist relations into previously marginal economic zones. When this crisis displacement strategy reaches its limit, increasingly severe general world crises erupt, thereby indicating the need to put demands for a new historical form of production on the political agenda.

For Marxist politics, the proletariat becoming a class-for-itself is still a project, a hope, and above all a matter of class consciousness. The formation of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC) could also be said to be a project and a matter of consciousness. William K. Carroll argues that we need to bring greater clarity to the old Marxist concepts of class-in-itself and class-for-itself, as well as concepts of “the global” and the “transnational”. The TCC, as he refers to it throughout his article, is not fully realized. Rather it exists as “a regional tendency that co-exists amid structures and practices of an era of capitalism fading but not extinguished.” The emerging TCC consciousness (becoming a class-for-itself) residual sticking point is the United States. While the Clintons and Obama embodied and embraced the movement toward the consolidation of the TCC, Carroll argues that, to the extent that ‘Trumpism’ can be seen to be coherent at all, it is going against this tendency. It is an effort to, as Carroll puts it “make America(n capital) great again.” To conclude, he argues that the half century long history of capital cross-penetration among the advanced states has muted but not yet eliminated geopolitical rivalries.

In what follows, Sandra Carpenter’s article focuses upon disability. She recounts her own experiences to argue that the struggle for independent living led by people with disabilities is a key element of the broader struggle for social equality. Epistemic inequality and injustice is the focus of Michael D. Baumtrog’s paper. He argues that children and youth may face unjust knowledge-based discrimination and expounds a theory of epistemic injustice more generally. Mark Graham and Jamie Woodcock’s article on digital platform work enumerates the many negative aspects of the way such work is organized, not the least of which is the difficulty of organizing any collective bargaining power in this field of employment. But Graham and Woodcock offer a new strategy for the struggle: they propose establishing a Fairwork Foundation that

would setup certification schemes that are able to carefully distinguish between platforms that offer workers a fair deal and those that do not.

Cameron Fioret's paper provides an overview of philosophical issues concerning the commodification of water and provides the ethical grounds for why its commodification is clearly wrong. Ethical issues are also examined in a very different and politically grounded context in Amy Ritterbusch's paper. She reflects upon her own experiences as an academic and social justice activist in the preparation of a human rights report on the brutality exerted upon a homeless community in Bogota, Columbia. The aftermath of the report's publication and the critique alleging it to have been produced with a lack of methodological rigour forms the basis for a broader reflection upon the role of social scientific research in relation to struggles for social justice. The critique of her work argued that engaged, qualitative scholarship and methodological rigour are mutually exclusive. We, of course, side with her and do not at all believe this to be the case. But the report and its alleged 'objective' critique is the basis for examining the broader politically loaded 'paradigm war' about the nature of social scientific research.

Personal activist history and epistemology are also very much part of Bruce Ferguson's article. He makes the argument that we must draw upon indigenous metaphysics, language and stories as the primary source of strategy for resistance by Indigenous Peoples to guide them in the struggle to regain control of their lives, lands and resources. Norah Bowman draws upon Hannah Arendt's theories of moral and political impunity to examine Canadian corporate mining human rights violations in Guatemala, Honduras, and Canada. Arendt asserted that narratives of resistance are inevitable and Bowman suggests that this could provide a model for grassroots resistance. Crucially, in addition to Arendt's ideas, she also provides the oral narrative of Chief Darrel Bob of the St'at'lim First Nation as a resistance narrative.

This issue of *Alternate Routes* grew out of a conference jointly organized with the University of Holguin in Cuba. We hope all participants found the conference informative and worthwhile; we certainly did, and would like to thank all attendees for their deep insights and lively contributions. Many thanks are also due to the contributors of this volume, including the invaluable assistance of nearly two dozen peer-reviewers who graciously lent their time and expertise; these articles are all the better for it and a testament to scholars committed to social justice-oriented critical research that challenges social inequality in its many forms. A great deal of appreciation is also due to Jeff

Noonan and Jamey Essex for their steadfast work and commitment as co-editors of the Interventions section. We also want to thank Robert Marshall and Matthew Flisfeder for all their hard work and dedication as new book reviews co-editors; we encourage all readers to visit [www.alternateroutes.ca](http://www.alternateroutes.ca) and consider undertaking a review of their own. Finally, we began this introduction with one of Marx's most famous quotations, so it is perhaps fitting that we conclude it with one of his lesser known ones: "[W]e can formulate the trend of our journal as being: self-clarification (critical philosophy) to be gained by the present time of its struggles and desires. This is a work for the world and for us. It can be only the work of united forces."

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