

New York Times celebrates downfall of 201 “powerful men:” The ugly face of the #MeToo campaign

David Walsh
25 October 2018

The *New York Times* published a crude and revealing article October 23, “#MeToo Brought Down 201 Powerful Men. Nearly Half of Their Replacements Are Women.”

The piece, credited to seven authors, inadvertently points toward an important truth: the #MeToo campaign is fundamentally an effort by a layer of upper middle class women to advance their economic interests at the expense of their male rivals. The selfish and mercenary motives help explain why the sexual harassment crusade resorts to the foul methods of the smear campaign and the political witch-hunt.

The *Times* credits the allegations of sexual harassment and assault against film producer Harvey Weinstein, published last October in its own pages and in the *New Yorker* magazine, with having opened the floodgates. The article gloats that the newspaper’s research indicates that “at least 200 prominent men have lost their jobs after public allegations of sexual harassment. ... And nearly half of the men who have been replaced were succeeded by women.”

The *Times* does not bother to evaluate the truth or non-truth of the accusations. The authors begin from the assumption that allegations are to be accepted at face value—or, more cynically, that they are useful as part of a gender purge.

The deplorable piece begins breathlessly, “They had often gotten away with it for years, and for those they harassed, it seemed as if the perpetrators would never pay any consequences.” It later observes that the controversy over the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh showed that “Americans disagree on how people accused of sexual misconduct should be held accountable and what the standard of evidence should be.” Our seven authors, without a trace of democratic sensibility among them, fail to recognize that an individual merely *accused* is not to be held accountable for anything.

The core of the article is the immense *dual* pleasure the *Times* takes in the downfall of the various men—guilty or otherwise, accused of serious abuse or not—and their replacement in a good many cases by women clearly on the ascendancy.

The #MeToo movement, the article claims, “shook, and is still shaking, power structures in society’s most visible sectors.

The *Times* gathered cases of prominent people who lost their main jobs, significant leadership positions or major contracts, and whose ousters were publicly covered in news reports.

“Forty-three percent of their replacements were women. Of those, one-third are in news media, one-quarter in government, and one-fifth in entertainment and the arts. For example, Robin Wright replaced Kevin Spacey as lead actor on ‘House of Cards,’ Emily Nemens replaced Lorin Stein as editor of ‘The Paris Review,’ and Tina Smith replaced Al Franken as a senator from Minnesota.

“Women are starting to gain power in organizations that have been jolted by harassment, with potentially far-reaching effects.”

The article makes a half-hearted effort to convince *Times* readers that this “gain” in “power” will somehow make the world a better place.

“Research has repeatedly shown that women tend to lead differently. In general, they create more respectful work environments, where harassment is less likely to flourish and where women feel more comfortable reporting it. Female leaders tend to hire and promote more women; pay them more equally; and make companies more profitable. Women bring their life experiences and perspectives to decision-making, and that can help in business because women make the vast majority of purchasing decisions. In government, women have been shown to be more collaborative and bipartisan, and promote more policies supporting women, children and social welfare.”

This is rubbish hardly worth replying to. It is not even necessary to accept Rosa Luxemburg’s contention in 1912 that bourgeois women, equipped with full political rights, “would certainly be a good deal more reactionary than the male part of their class” to recognize that the female of the capitalist species is at least as vicious and exploitive as the male. Workers at PepsiCo, General Motors, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, IBM and HP Enterprise, all firms currently blessed with female CEOs, would be able to testify to that reality.

Referring only to recent US history, figures such as Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Clinton, Susan

Rice, Samantha Power, Nikki Haley, Victoria Nuland, Gina Haspel and others have surely proven themselves thoroughly and enthusiastically murderous. And one of the most conscious and ruthless enemies of “policies supporting women, children and social welfare” in the latter part of the 20th century was none other than British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

In all honesty, however, as noted, the stress in the October 23 *Times* article is not truly on the social progress the Weinstein allegations have ushered in—that is largely public relations meant to assuage the conscience of those readers susceptible to such things. The excited emphasis here rather is on the economic gains accruing to a small portion of the female population.

That small portion, of course, is already doing extraordinarily well. For example, an analysis by executive data firm Equilar, done for Associated Press, found that while women last year made up only five percent of CEOs at S&P 500 companies, “median compensation for a female CEO was valued at \$13.5 million for the 2017 fiscal year, versus \$11.5 million for their male counterparts. ... Median pay for female CEOs rose 15.4% from the prior year, while for men it increased 8.2%.”

In their recent article, the *Times* authors crassly offer a good many “success” stories.

Robert Scoble, co-founder of the Transformation Group, an augmented reality company, resigned after being accused of sexual assault or inappropriate behavior with three women, and was replaced by **Irena Cronin**.

John Besh, chief executive, Besh Restaurant Group, stepped down from day-to-day operations after accusations of sexual harassment from multiple employees. **Shannon White** took his place.

NBC News political journalist **Mark Halperin**, accused of sexual harassment, had his job taken by **Alex Wagner**.

Hamilton Fish, publisher and president of the *New Republic*, resigned after accusations of inappropriate conduct. **Rachel Rosenfelt** took over from him.

Leonard Lopate was fired as host on New York Public Radio after complaints of sexual harassment. Lopate, who said he had “never done anything inappropriate on any level,” was replaced by **Alison Stewart**.

Etc., etc.

In the various “swapping” of positions the *Times* documents, how many tens of millions of dollars in income have gone from one gender column to the other? The newspaper remains discreetly silent.

Among the many statistics the *Times* is pleased to report, another also goes missing: that 75 or so of the men denied the accusations altogether. Others agreed their behavior had been inappropriate and apologized. Also missing from the article—the word “convicted” or the phrase “found guilty.” No matter, careers have been made and advancement in a good many cases assured.

The *Times* leaves it to the political charlatans in the

International Socialist Organization, at *Jacobin* magazine and the rest of the pseudo-left to carry on the pretense that there is anything “progressive” or “left-wing” about the current sexual misconduct campaign.

The article on the downfall of the 201 “powerful men” proceeds along the same general lines as a number of other *Times* pieces inspired by the #MeToo campaign.

In March, Susan Chira, a senior correspondent and editor on gender issues at the newspaper, in her article, “Money Is Power. And Women Need More of Both,” lamented the small number of female billionaires and the fact that “many women, those who grew up wealthy and those who did not, have long been steered away from the unapologetic drive for wealth.”

A *Times* opinion piece in April, by novelist Jessica Knoll, carried the unapologetic headline, “I Want to Be Rich and I’m Not Sorry.” Knoll elaborated, “Success, for me, is synonymous with making money. I want to write books, but I really want to sell books. I want advances that make my husband gasp and fat royalty checks twice a year,” etc.

These are the reactionary, grasping elements gathering around the #MeToo and Time’s Up banners.

However, they feel their newly won positions are not entirely secure, dangers still lurk. The disgraced males might not simply disappear as they are supposed to do. “More than 10 percent of the ousted men,” the *Times* piece notes, “have tried to make a comeback, or voiced a desire to, and many never lost financial power. The comedian Louis C.K. recently took the stage at the Comedy Cellar in New York, raising questions of how long is long enough for people to be banished from their field, and who gets to decide. Garrison Keillor, the radio host, has restarted ‘The Writer’s Almanac’ as a podcast and reportedly received \$275,000 for a deal in which Minnesota Public Radio reposted archived episodes of his programs.”

Again, this latest outburst from the *Times* staff, which cannot help itself, shows the sexual witch-hunt’s true class interests.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact