

## **NASUWT – Roundtable June 12, 2024**

**The defence and extension of democracy. In a year when nearly half of the world's population goes to the polls, what more can unions and teachers do to defend and extend true democracy for the benefit of the profession and our children and young people?**

2024 is a year full of election appointments around the world, while 2023 ended with two worrying statements: Milei in Argentina and Wilders in the Netherlands, populist, extremist, openly right-wing. In Portugal, the centre-right Democratic Alliance coalition won in March, and Russia is still led by Putin until 2030. For the United States, there are fears of Trump's return: we will only know in November. In the EU, the June vote gave us a landscape in which the People's Party holds, but black extremism is advancing. The right wing is the largest party in France and Austria, and in Germany it doubles its votes and overtakes the Socialists. In Spain, the traditional right-wing Partido Popular (PP) is ahead of the Socialists, and here, too, the ultra-right is gaining ground thanks to Vox. In Italy, it consolidates its primacy. The right, more or less extreme, is advancing throughout the old continent, but thanks to the good result of the People's Party, the parliament with a pro-EU majority is not in question. The alarming figure is the turnout at 49.6%.

So conservatives in power or authoritarian and neo-fascist governments, as happened in the Netherlands, Italy and some Nordic countries, including Sweden. This situation is also the result of austerity policies.

In fact, for many years now, austerity economic policies have weighed on public spending in all countries and have shown how harmful it is to think in purely financial terms for education and health, sectors that heavily affect the quality of life of citizens and universal rights. Therefore, we reiterate the EI's demands launched with the Go public! Fund Education! for greater investment in education, training and research, starting with the fight against inequalities and support for the right to education for all, regardless of income, family and socio-economic background. We support public schools and to avoid the privatization of education that must be guaranteed to all by the state. An inclusive education is an indispensable prerequisite, a first step towards the quality of education, which is expressed by training those global citizens, well described by UNESCO, in possession of knowledge and cognitive and socio-emotional skills such as to make them able to understand the world and its complexities and to live peacefully with respect for others.

In addition to the educational role of schools, we emphasize the important social and political function that belongs to trade unions, which have the capacity to heal democracy" and have the "vision" that serves "to rejuvenate it".

It is essential to:

- bring together the collective power of trade unions around the world to defend democratic values and workers' rights, starting in the workplace and continuing to the level of global institutions";
- emphasise the fundamental rights of workers, namely freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike; empowering workers in their workplaces;
- support freedom of speech, fair tax systems, gender equality, social protection and quality public services, and challenge the dominance of corporate interests and far-right ideologies;
- call for the reform of international economic structures to prioritise human rights, a just global financial system, equitable cooperation among nations and peaceful common security.

As Instructions organizations, we call on governments:

- to put in place appropriate macroeconomic policies and to reform global economic governance, making choices to strengthen investment in public education;
- to assume its responsibilities and use its political and economic power to promote peace, to intervene effectively on the risks of conflict, to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, and to stop the rush to military spending that is all too often taking place at the expense of social spending.