

The political impact and growing readership of the World Socialist Web Site

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The WSWS is publishing the speeches delivered by leading members of the ICFI and contributors to the WSWS at the online rally held October 25 to welcome the relaunching of the WSWS that began with the postings of October 2, 2020. The remarks below were given by Patrick Martin, a member of the Socialist Equality Party (US) national committee and leading writer on the WSWS.

We are marking the October 2 relaunch of the *World Socialist Web Site* as a significant landmark in the development of the world Trotskyist movement.

Comrade Dave has already made reference to the decision by the International Committee of the Fourth International to begin publishing the WSWS in February 1998. For those in my generation, it is remarkable that we have already spent nearly half our political lives writing for an internet audience, one that simply did not exist when we entered politics. Prior to the WSWS, we published the *Bulletin* in the US, weekly and twice-weekly, and the *International Workers Bulletin*, weekly and bi-weekly, print publications through which we fought to reach and politically educate the American and international working class.

It does not diminish those early efforts in the slightest to note that today, articles on the WSWS that go viral, such as our reports on school cuts in Massachusetts, or the assassination of antifascist protester Michael Reinoehl on the West Coast, or the numerous commentaries on the 1619 Project, reach a larger audience in a few days than we could reach by distributing a printed newspaper in months, if not years.

After all, it was the work of the *Bulletin* and the newspapers published by our sister parties around the world that, through an intransigent struggle for Marxist principles, laid the basis for the creation of the WSWS,

the first truly global publication of the international working class. The WSWS is now read in virtually every country and on every continent.

When we launched the WSWS in February 1998, the United States was, as it is today, in the throes of a major political crisis which threatened to topple a president—although in retrospect, Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky, which was leveraged by his ultra-right opponents to impeach him, was only the initial form of the breakdown of American democracy that is culminating today in the fascistic conspiracies of President Trump. But we recognized then, at the very earliest stage of this process, that the attempt to oust a twice-elected president through the methods of a sex scandal involved significant questions of democratic rights. We said that the working class should not simply stand aside, but should intervene in the political crisis of the ruling elite and fight for its independent interests. We accordingly opposed the impeachment, despite our hostility to the Democratic Party and to the policies of American imperialism under Clinton.

From the onset of the WSWS, we began daily postings, five days a week. This made possible nearly day-to-day analysis and commentary on the US political crisis. In that first year of publication, we wrote more than 100 articles on various aspects of the Clinton crisis, which comprise a unique political record and established a pattern for other crises and major political events, both in the United States and around the world. The following year, in the course of the US-NATO war against Serbia, we expanded publication to six days a week.

In the initial welcome published on the WSWS on February 14, 1998, we declared the WSWS to be the official voice of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

We wrote:

The *World Socialist Web Site*, published by the coordinated efforts of ICFI members in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, takes as its starting point the international character of the class struggle. It assesses political developments in every country from the standpoint of the world crisis of capitalism and the political tasks confronting the international working class. Flowing from this perspective, it resolutely opposes all forms of chauvinism and national parochialism.

This political standpoint of revolutionary internationalism has been vindicated in the course of many struggles of the working class around the world, but above all by the objective development of world capitalism itself. The coronavirus pandemic is not the first time that the international working class has experienced a crisis of global dimensions which has affected workers throughout the world more or less simultaneously.

This was the character of the “war on terror” that began after the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and then the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which provoked a worldwide outpouring of political opposition, the biggest antiwar movement in history. In 2008-2009 came the global financial crisis, which plunged the whole of world capitalism into the deepest slump since the Great Depression of the 1930s. And now we have the coronavirus pandemic, which affects working people in the same way in every corner of the globe.

We noted at the time the WSWS was launched that 80 million-100 million people had access to the internet. This audience was dismissed as insignificant or highly privileged by some of our enemies in the pseudo-left. One group claimed that we were fleeing into cyberspace, as though the internet was a backwater or a desert island on which we were about to become marooned. Today, there are 4.6 billion people who are active users of the internet, and many more who have access to it.

As the internet audience has expanded, so has our work to reach it. During its first year, the WSWS

published about 1,500 articles in English. Over a number of years, this rose to more than 4,000 a year. Since the first major redesign of the site, in 2008, which introduced the Perspective column, we have regularly published more than 5,000 articles a year. In August of last year, 2019, the cumulative total reached 75,000 in English, and today that figure is well over 82,000, after a year in which both our audience and the work of the IC sections contributing to the WSWS reached new highs.

Working people and particularly young people all over the world find their struggles and political experiences connecting internationally, and that is why they respond so strongly to a website that seeks to consciously unite the working class of the world.

In this sense, the WSWS represents something completely new. It is the voice of the international working class, conscious of itself and its historical mission, and preparing for the overthrow of capitalism on a world scale and the building of a new, international socialist society.



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