The approach of the World Socialist Web Site to science

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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. Bryan Dyne is a science writer for the WSWS.

I'd like to use this opportunity to speak on the approach of the WSWS to science. For the past nine months, this has been most embodied by our coverage of the coronavirus pandemic. Starting with the first articles published in January, we have undertaken a very careful analysis of the medical significance of this new virus and its intersection with society. This has involved both articles on the political situation as well as material on the epidemiology of the virus itself.

In contrast, the Trump administration, the Democrats, and their counterparts internationally essentially ignored the science, and all sought to downplay and conceal the threat posed by the contagion. As such, we were the only political tendency to warn very early on the dangers the working class faced if the virus was allowed to run rampant across the world and to call for a globally coordinated emergency response to the spreading coronavirus pandemic.

Those warnings have been tragically confirmed: more than 1.15 million human beings are dead worldwide and social life for billions has been totally upended.

Such figures expose the stark contradictions in modern society between the immense advances that have been made in medicine during the last century and the barriers placed on applying these advances to everyday life under capitalism. In a rational and scientifically planned world, an emergent and potentially pandemic-inducing disease would not be neglected for weeks and months to protect the stock market, but met immediately with every resource available to contain the pathogen, treat those infected, and secure the livelihoods of the hundreds of millions of people who would be affected by the economic fallout.

The gap between what science says would be good for humanity and what is happening under capitalism exists in every field of science—medicine, as well as physics, biology, astronomy, to name a few. As we noted in our recent coverage of the OSIRIS-Rex spacecraft's sample collection of an asteroid, "it is almost incalculable what results would be delivered within our lifetime" if the resources for war and profits were turned to exploration and scientific discovery.

More broadly, our focus on science since the founding of the website in 1998 stems from our insistence that the working class, if it is to advance, must be armed with a thorough understanding of the world. This is a point Marxists have always stressed. The development of society as a whole is based on the development of the productive forces, which in turn drive and are spurred on by developments in science. The technology through which we are having this meeting, the internet, became so pervasive in large part because of the emergence of transnational production in the early 1990s, which provided an economic necessity for the ability to store and access information from anywhere in the world.

This is not, however, simply a matter of, for example, an autoworker knowing the mechanics, electrical engineering, material science and thermodynamics that make a car possible. There is a need to turn toward a scientific approach not just to natural phenomena, but to understanding the just as complex historical and social processes that govern our lives—the objective laws of capitalist development.

Such studies are all the more necessary in a world

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dominated by the incessant glorification of irrationalism, whether through the cultivation of backwardness and religious obscurantism or the promotion of postmodernism. Workers must take up the fight against all those who deny that objective knowledge exists, that somehow reality is created through language. If that were true, Trump's assertion over the summer that "With smaller testing we would show fewer cases" would have meant an end to the pandemic.

Workers must also be at the forefront in the struggle against all attempts to divide it using anti-scientific concepts such as race. As we've written about on the WSWS extensively, there is no basis for the concept of different "races" of human beings, whether in the anthropologic record, which shows a great deal of human migration and mixing even hundreds of thousands of years ago, to DNA itself, which in fact cannot be used to reveal someone's "race" or nationality.

The WSWS has also paid special attention to the ever-growing existential threat of climate change. Similar to the pandemic, it knows no national borders and is an inherently international problem. As many recent scientific papers on the topic have stressed, the only real solution to halting global warming and all its ongoing and oncoming catastrophes is through a reorganization of the world's energy production and transportation infrastructure and the development of new technologies to immediately halt carbon emissions.

We have also insisted that the fight for a safe environment must reject any solution to the climate crisis that calls for a vast reduction of the world's "surplus population." Such Malthusian attitudes deny the fact that it is not "humanity" that has brought the world's biosphere to the brink of collapse, it is the twin barriers of capitalism and the nation-state system that have stunted any serious efforts to reverse global warming.

Driven inexorably by its internal contradictions, capitalism is leading mankind toward the abyss of plagues, world war, environmental catastrophe and dictatorship. These same contradictions, however, also produce the basis for the overthrow of capitalism: the international working class.

As Trotsky noted 94 years ago in *Radio, Science, Technique and Society*, "Technique and science have their own logic—the logic of the cognition of nature and the mastering of it in the interests of man. But technique and science develop not in a vacuum but in human society, which consists of classes. The ruling class, the possessing class, controls technique and through it controls nature."

Our writing on science, now more accessible than ever on the relaunched WSWS, seeks to make these objective processes more conscious, to imbue the growing opposition of millions of workers and youth with the knowledge and understanding that the progress of science—and the progress of humanity as a whole—depends on the resurgence of a new revolutionary movement of the working class. Our movement unites under its banner both the pursuit of scientific truth in all its forms and the struggle to establish an internationally coordinated, scientifically directed system of economic planning based on equality and the satisfaction of human need: socialism.

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