# WSWS's fight against Facebook censorship draws international support

**Kevin Reed**
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The *World Socialist Web Site*, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth & Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) have received an outpouring of support internationally following the announcement on Friday that Facebook had deleted the accounts of leading members of the SEP and shut down the page of the IYSSE at the University of Michigan.

The widespread support—including letters to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, statements on the WSWS, thousands of likes and shares on social media—from workers, young people, journalists and professionals were a critical factor in the decision by Facebook to restore the IYSSE page and SEP accounts.

As we reported yesterday, Facebook restored the accounts and claimed unconvincingly that the politically motivated purge of the socialists from its platform two days earlier was the result of a technical glitch. As WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North explained to the *Financial Times* in a front-page story on Monday, "Even though this particular ban has been [reversed], it's a warning we don't know what might come next."

The reports about the attempt by Facebook to suppress socialist and left-wing views on its platform were read by tens of thousands of people over the weekend, many of them coming from links shared by other Facebook users. A post by WSWS writer and editor Andre Damon on Twitter announcing that the University of Michigan IYSSE page and the accounts of the administrators had been permanently suspended were liked and retweeted thousands of times.

This tweet was also retweeted and commented on by journalists Glenn Greenwald, Katie Halper and Matt Taibbi.

Among the letters sent to Facebook's Zuckerberg denouncing the purging of the IYSSE and SEP accounts were the following:

**John D. Short of Philtrum Publishing Federation:** "For some time, I have watched your social media server censor numerous content that exposes the destruction incurred on the peoples of Yemen, Syria and elsewhere, largely by services like the *World Socialist Web Site*, and other left-wing, anti-war platforms. ... This has to stop, tolerating fiction and censoring truth can only be dangerous."

**Emanuele Saccarelli**, **Department of Political Science Professor at San Diego State University:** "I heard you recently and abruptly eliminated the account of a socialist student organization, as well as the private accounts of several of its leading members. A few days later you proceeded to inform them that this was simply the result of an 'automation error.' What a relief! And to think they initially regarded this as a deliberate act of political censorship carried out by an Orwellian corporate conglomerate. Nothing to see here then, but a clumsy blunder carried out with surgical political precision by anonymous algorithms. ..."

**Ingrid Schreiner, Australia:** "I am writing in protest against the censorship of members of the Socialist Equality Party and other pages including personal pages of members of Socialist movements. How have these people violated Facebook's terms and conditions? They have not promoted hate or violence in any way? Why have they been censored? Facebook is a platform to express our views and to share. To see this happen is an attack on our freedom of speech and shines a light on Facebook as unjust and biased. Which brings to the surface agendas of social control and manipulation by 'Facebook'? I demand an immediate reversal of your actions."

**Roger Tinkoff:** "... I may be a pretty well-taken-care-of Bay Area software engineer, but my first job as a teenager was in a grocery store in Massachusetts where we all had union representation, and as a result of that experience I do and will always identify as a worker. Workers are the people who the WSWS/SEP are out there every day fighting for, genuinely and courageously, and their efforts need to be supported and their ability to organize through social media is crucial. Facebook no doubt employs thousands of people just like me, and by silencing the voices of the WSWS/SEP the company is taking hostile action against them too."

**Kerby Miller:** "By taking down the accounts of members of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the IYSSE, and of

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individuals associated with those organizations, Facebook is acting as if it were an arm of the capitalist ruling class, engaging in censorship, and suppressing the exercise of free speech, which is an absolute cornerstone of a democratic government. You are facilitating a new McCarthyism and the drive toward a totalitarian government and society, where certain viewpoints—most definitely left-wing and socialist—are not accorded the same rights as others. ... By censoring leftist and socialist groups, you only announce to the world that US 'democracy' is so fragile that it cannot deal with honest, radical criticism."

**Dr. Andrew Linder:** "... I am a long-time follower of Socialist Equality Party and avid reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*. I spend my day as a researcher and freelance writer trolling the net. I know for certain that the WSWS site draws ever-greater readership for the calm clarity and consistently profound quality of its analysis. I am old enough to remember when the United States did not tolerate dissent, not only from the left, but god help us from comic books, folk music and rock and roll. ... I do hope that a wave of letters arrives on your desk from more prominent voices than mine. I add my name."

**Carolyn Zaremba:** "... Facebook can censor socialist viewpoints at its whim, yes, but you cannot censor the objective social and economic conditions that working people face all over the world. It is these conditions that are driving working people into struggle against capitalism: an economic system that has repeatedly proved its incapacity to meet humanity's needs and in fact is the root cause of war between nation states. Your act of censorship does nothing to improve conditions of life for the majority of humanity and cannot prevent the working class from realizing that it is capitalism that is the source of their problems. ..."

**Judith Jackson:** "Having disabled the group account for the University of Michigan IYSSE account, and those of its admins and leading members of the Socialist Equality Party, Facebook restored these accounts on Monday. While an apology was made, there has not been a satisfactory explanation given as to why these accounts were targeted, other than it was an 'automation error.' Given that Facebook employs several thousand personnel to monitor accounts, I for one do not take this explanation at face value. ..."

Others sent their statements of support to the *World Socialist Web Site* and also explained that they had been censored by Facebook:

**James Crump:** "I'm a key worker in mental health in the UK and would like to express my solidarity for you in this time of politically motivated censorship by Facebook, with its purging of left-wing accounts, especially those of SEP members. The WSWS is the only consistent and regular source of analysis from a revolutionary socialist perspective, and such, is playing an essential, inexpungeable role in helping to educate a new generation of socialists, myself included, not only but especially in this time of crisis."

**Dr. Laurie Cestnick:** "... In November 2020, the personal pages of all 3 administrators of the page were shut down all on the same day within minutes of each other. None of us ever spams and we run a very clean and respectful page ... there was no reason for it. Once my personal page was back, a message popped up stating 'You are not allowed to create any more groups until February 2021' ... I hadn't created a group since 2015—my progressive group, so this was extremely odd. I STILL cannot even post on my OWN group wall (link above) and all other admins are still off of FB. Thankfully a couple of moderators were left to man the page but we still get threats from FB to shut us down with no explanation. Not only can I not post on my own group wall, but I am a neuroscientist and neuropsychologist/psychologist and cannot even post on my own page that I created to help children with autism, dyslexia etc."

After reading the report of the Facebook purge of left-wing accounts, **a supporter of the Rank-and-File Safety Committee at the Faurecia Gladstone plant** in Columbus, Indiana said, "Any way you interpret that it denies the right to free speech. I don't see how they thought that would fly. That is another way they are trying to silence the working class. We are fed up with this situation with COVID-19, and the WSWS is telling the truth. The ruling elite has every right to be fearful of the working class. They know that if we band together it will spell the end of their system.

"They went after the IYSSE because they know that if the youth get involved with the working class their future is on shaky ground. That is what they are worried about. The working class and the youth are pulling together."

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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