

How to end the pandemic: The case for eradication

Statement of the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board
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On October 24, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) are holding an online webinar to explain the urgent necessity for the adoption of a policy of eradicating COVID-19. A panel of scientists and epidemiologists will provide the critical knowledge necessary to develop a broad-based and international movement to finally put an end to the pandemic.

The international webinar comes at a critical stage in the pandemic. On the one hand, there is a growing demand among working people for effective action to bring the nightmare of the pandemic to an end. On October 1, a school strike, called by UK parent Lisa Diaz to oppose the irresponsible reopening of schools that has placed the lives of children at enormous risk, won a significant response from workers throughout the world.

On the other hand, governments, acting under immense pressure from global corporate and financial interests, are abandoning all measures previously put in place to stop the spread of the pandemic.

On Monday, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the reopening of schools and businesses in Auckland, the country's largest city. New Zealand had been one of the few countries that had implemented a "zero-Covid" strategy.

Restrictions are being removed not because they have failed, but because they have succeeded. In New Zealand, only 27 people have died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. However, success in saving lives through policies devised by conscientious scientists has come at the expense of corporate profits. Confronting a deepening economic and supply chain crisis, the giant transnational corporations and banks are demanding the removal of all restrictions on business operations, regardless of the infections and

deaths that will be the inevitable consequence.

A similar course is being pursued in Australia, where restrictions on travel have been removed following an open letter from major corporations denouncing the "big mistakes" of federal and state governments in attempting to contain the spread of the virus.

Enormous pressure has been brought to bear on the countries of the Asia/Pacific, fueling a sharp spike in the pandemic throughout the region. Demands for a shift in course are likewise directed at China, the world's most populous country, which, through aggressive public health measures, has limited the death toll to less than 5,000 in a population of 1.4 billion.

In the United States and the major European powers, all pretense of serious measures to stop transmission has been abandoned. Schools have been reopened to in-person learning, leading to a sharp rise in cases and deaths among children and unknown consequences for an entire generation that faces the prospect of "Long Covid." Children have been returned to schools to contract and spread the virus so that their parents can return to work pumping out profits for the corporate elite.

The line in the American media is that it is "necessary to live with the virus," and that further public health measures must be abandoned.

"Covid-19 is once again in retreat," wrote David Leonhardt of the *New York Times* on Monday, claiming that a slight drop in cases indicates that the worst of the pandemic is likely over. The pandemic will continue, he acknowledges, but it should be allowed to become endemic in the population. "Covid also isn't going to disappear anytime soon. It will continue to circulate for years, many scientists believe. But the vaccines can transform Covid into a manageable disease, not so

different from a flu or common cold... Whatever the autumn brings, the worst of the pandemic is almost certainly behind us."

This is a lie. Not only is the vast majority of the world's population unvaccinated, including all children under the age of 12, but the continued spread of the virus guarantees the evolution of new strains, including possibly those that are more infectious and vaccine resistant. COVID-19, moreover, is far from a "common cold." It is an incredibly deadly virus, which, if allowed to become endemic, could kill millions more people.

The moves to remove all restraints on the spread of the pandemic cast a harsh light on the social and economic interests that have determined government policy from the beginning. The response to the pandemic has been driven by the economic prerogatives of the ruling elite, expressed in the dictum that saving lives must be balanced against "the economy," and that "the cure can't be worse than the disease."

The WSWS has identified the three basic strategies for approaching the virus: 1) "herd immunity," that is, essentially encouraging the spread of the virus based on the claim that if enough people are infected it will ultimately lead to an end to the pandemic; 2) mitigation, which claims that a collection of half-measures combined with vaccination will bring the pandemic under control; and 3) eradication, the universal deployment of every weapon in the arsenal of measures to combat COVID-19, coordinated on a global scale.

The current state of the pandemic and the systematic abandonment of restrictions that have been put in place make clear that the only viable method for ending the pandemic is eradication. Vaccination, while an effective tool, can stop transmission only if it is combined with aggressive public health measures, including the shutdown of non-essential production and schools, along with mass testing, contact tracing and isolation of infected individuals.

Without an intervention by the working class to force a change in policy, the virus will continue to spread and evolve, exacting a staggering toll on human life.

The basis of political action must be knowledge and understanding. In the face of an unrelenting propaganda campaign from governments and the media, it is vital and urgent to arm the public with scientific truth.

The working class cannot advance the fight against the pandemic without the aid of science, and the implementation of the scientifically necessary measures to stop the pandemic depends on the building of a movement in the working class. Scientists who are dedicated to public health must resist the enormous pressure that is being exerted by the banks and corporations and take a stand in defense of human life.

Millions of lives have already been lost, and millions more will be lost if a change in policy is not implemented. The pandemic can and must be stopped. Coordinated and aggressive public health measures, implemented on a global scale, can stamp out the virus once and for all.

The October 24 online webinar will present to a global audience the scientific case for eradication. We call on all of our readers to register for the webinar today, speak to your co-workers about it, and promote the event as widely as possible on social media.



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