

A Comment on the Relaunch of the World Socialist Website:

Who is Afraid of Transparency?

Our ruling class is scared to death of the growing crisis of political transparency. But so also are all the cargo cults which--more than anything--seek to avoid the question which will increasingly dominate the ranks of the anti-capitalist left:

What would Lenin do in the age of social media?

Ben Seattle -- September 30, 2020 -- 9:30.949pm -- 7001 words

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*Dedicated to all who have made sacrifices, large or small,
to prove that the proletariat believes that Black Lives Matter*

Recently, the **World Socialist Website** (WSWS) announced a relaunch of their site, with improved access for smartphones, better search and navigation, and tighter integration of current news articles with historical background [1]. By the standards of small groups on the left, the WSWS is impressive, with more than **25 million page views** a year, content in more than **20 languages**, and an archive of more than **125,000 articles**. All this will use "industry-leading technology".

In reading their announcement, however, I noticed that important things have been left out. It is often said that, in

politics, **context is everything**. In this article, I give important context to this moment, so we can understand what was left out--and how to get it back.

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Michael Reinhoehl would be alive today
if we had a better public network

1. The century of information war

The **specter of transparency** is haunting the world's ruling classes--the one percent who are the custodians of capital--and who own or control essentially all our institutions and politicians.

If we study **recent news**, and put the parts of the puzzle together, a clear pattern is emerging:

- (1) Social media, cable and broadcast outlets are being **flooded with hyper-partisan news** (much of it extreme exaggeration or fake) from well-funded camps at odds with one another.
- (2) **Social media giants** such as Facebook and Google have stepped up **censorship of news, analysis and agitation** from anarchist, marxist, and class struggle trends.
- (3) The US government is clamping down on (or simply banning) social media giants **TikTok** and **WeChat**, which are controlled by its emerging imperialist rival **China** (with which it appears to be on a collision course--more likely than not to lead to military conflict by the middle of this century).

The pattern is becoming increasingly clear: **humanity has entered a century of information war**. And, in the wake of this information war, will emerge the biggest threat of all: **political transparency**.

2. Information war is not new

Information war can be understood as **a war of ideas, organized on a mass scale**.

Information war is associated, in the minds of many, with a **flood of lies and propaganda**. But lies and propaganda are not new, and have tended to dominate the news since at least the time of Sargon, ruler of Mesopotamia near the dawn of civilization, more than four thousand years ago.

What is new, in the context of modern industrialized society, is that **the ruling class** in the United States, and other Western countries, **may be losing the ability to speak** (and fool the masses) **with** (more or less) **a single voice**.

Consider the United States (where I live):

In the "good old days", it was so much easier to lie (i.e.: the institution of slavery is "good" for the slaves -- "we" must grab the land of other peoples because it is our "manifest destiny" -- "we" must go to war in Vietnam because the communists attacked "our" ships in the gulf of Tonkin -- "we" must go to war in Iraq to defend our cities against weapons of mass destruction, etc.) and enslave or kill millions in order to increase or protect profits.

Nowadays it is not-as-easy to fool everyone with a (more or less) single voice--because of the damn internet--people just have too damn much access to too damn much information.

3. Occupy and the internet

The **big warning** for the ruling class in the United States was the Occupy movement, which emerged in the fall of 2011 after being inspired by similar movements in Egypt and across southern Europe. These movements were all **fueled by the availability of information on social media**--which (1) exposed the crimes, lies and hypocrisy of all sections of the local ruling class, and (2) enabled activists to mobilize for huge mass actions in the streets.

In particular, the **2008 financial crisis** had left hundreds of thousands of recent graduates with no ability to get jobs--and unpayable student debt--which they owed to the very **same big banks** that had caused the crisis in the first place. These banks had been given complete freedom (against the advise of all experts) to ruin the economy by **both the Democratic and Republican parties**. In this moment, the idea that the banks and both parties of the rich were part of the **ruling one percent**--and opposed to the interests of everyone else--caught on like wildfire. Soon there were Occupy movements in more than 100 cities.

4. Make them beg and plead

The **response** of our ruling class (after they shit their pants in fear) was to **intensify divide-and-rule**. If the working class and masses no longer believed that there were significant differences between the **twin parties of capital**--if the Democratic Party was no longer able to fool them--then our ruling class would teach them a lesson--and **make them beg and plead for the Democratic Party**. The intensification of divide-and-rule is what brought us Trump--and what is bringing us the current flood of increasingly shrill lies.

Note well: Divide-and-rule is hardly new either. One of its early pioneers was the previously mentioned Sargon.

Consider how **clever and convenient** the current political arrangement is: instead of the **unity of the working class and oppressed** against the twin parties of the ruling class--the population is currently **split into two hostile** and almost exactly evenly matched **camp**s, each camp anchored to a ruling class puppet who, above all, upholds the needs of capital. Note how this makes it relatively easy for our ruling class (and its institutions and flunkies) to **tip the balance**, tilt the scale, one way or the other--anytime it needs to escalate the tension and drama.

But it is important to keep things in **perspective**. Our ruling class seems to be flooding us with their polarizing shit-show antics for the simple reason that they **do not have any better way to keep the truth suppressed**--so they are resorting to attempts to **drown it all out** (and wear us down) with **high-volume theater** featuring Republican and Democratic action stars.

5. We are up against a team

We have seen this show before. In televised wrestling, this is known as the "face" vs. the "heel". In comedy, this is the **straight man** and the **clown**. In policing, this is the **"good cop"** vs. the **"bad cop"**. In the Simpsons, this is Itchy and Scratchy, the cartoon-within-a-cartoon cat and mouse who constantly kill one another in ingenious and diabolical ways. In less modern times--when entertainment was provided by puppet shows--this was Punch and Judy.

The differences between the rival political camps are real--as shown by hundreds of thousands of dead bodies in the current pandemic--with more to come--mainly due to Trump's blatant defense of the needs of **capital** (which considers the deaths of older people to be little more

than the liquidation of liabilities). But if the **rivalry** between the twin parties of capital is real, so also is their **partnership**.

We need to remember that we are up against a **team**.

None of these tactics are new--they have all developed from about the time that humans learned how to plant seeds in the ground and build the first cities.

What is new, for humanity, is the **internet**. Currently, the internet is a source of incalculably infinite piles of bullshit. But--after the dust has had time to settle, it will be clear that the internet will also turn out to be the solution to this problem.

We just need to understand the big picture. The solution will be the truth.

6. The truth will out

My dad used to tell me "the truth will out". It does. You can **distract** people with bullshit, and **incite** them to kill one another, and this may



delay (for a while) the emergence of the truth. But the truth still comes out. Nothing can stop it forever.

In modern terminology, **transparency** is the emergence of the truth. Transparency is what happens after information war has gone on long enough that the truth emerges, like plants that grow out of the ashes of a fire. The lies, and the counter-lies, burn until they all expose one another, and only the truth remains--because it does not burn, it remains the truth.

7. Censorship and repression

"Sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield"
-- George Orwell [2]

We must recognize, of course, that the emergence of the truth is sometimes **delayed** with censorship, violence and repression on a mass scale. This may work in the short term, but does not always go as planned. The best known example, of course, is German fascism.

One of the first things Hitler did was to **silence opposing voices**. This made everything else he did possible. Many who lived in Germany knew the truth about Hitler from the beginning. Others only learned the truth in 1945, after German fascism had laid waste to much of Europe, and the country had been destroyed.

With or without repression and violence, in the long run, the truth will emerge. It will emerge sooner and with less destruction--or later, from the ashes and rubble--but nothing is going to stop it.

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8. Every secret will be revealed
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Transparency is coming to humanity. Every secret about how our ruling class rules, every deception that fuels the tactic of divide-and-rule, will become known. Everything important about what needs to be done--will be revealed. **Transparency is coming--and no force on earth on earth will be able to stop it.** We are already feeling its effects. And, with each decade that passes, its power and its influence (in my observation) seems to be approximately doubling.

Is there an end in sight to this?

Yes, there is.

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9. Where is all this leading?
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Where this is all leading--is the replacement of our current economic and political system--with an economic and political system which is not based on **the rule of capital**--and is not even based on the creation and sale of commodities. This will be a world **without money**, without trade, without exploitation, **without divide-and-rule**, and without war. This will be a world without social classes based on the ownership of the means of production. This will be a world of **abundance**, based on volunteer labor and genuine community.

The **transition to this new world** will not necessarily be easy. The replacement of the economic and political system of **feudalism** (i.e.: the rule of kings, such as in "Game of Thrones", but without the dragons) by the modern system of capitalism--**took place over several bloody centuries.**

The **20th century** was witness to horrific violence on a mass scale, and our current century may turn out to be the same--or worse. Weapons of unimaginable terror are in the hands of people who will not hesitate to use them in a desperate effort to protect the piles of capital they serve and represent. But this **capital has no long-term future.** It will appear in history alongside the divine right of kings.

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10. The way things were
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We can, of course, hope for the best. But we have no certain way, in this century, to avoid the catastrophes of the last one. Anyone who tells you different--is either uninformed, a fool, or a liar.

I know that this is not what many readers want to hear. I know that many would like to just go back to "the way things were". I understand. But time will make clear that the way things were is gone forever. And we will need to understand that it was the way things were--that brought us, inevitably, to the way things are.

What we can do, at this point, is **work to understand** what is going on--and what needs to be done.

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11. The clear and certain path forward
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What needs to be done is to take real steps in the direction of the **clear and certain path forward** for humanity: the development of a public, universal and **democratic social media platform**, based on **democratic algorithms** and **beyond the control** of any government or corporation. Such a democratic platform has never before been possible. Modern technology, and social conditions, have made the emergence of such a platform possible. More than this, they will make it **inevitable.**

Such a democratic platform **will bring light and consciousness** to the **working class**--and knowledge of its **historic mission and destiny**--which is to **overthrow the rule of capital** (which is the reason for our current misery and crisis) and bring **abundance** and **genuine community** to everyone who breathes.

12. Democratic platform is inevitable

The **need** for such a democratic platform will become more **obvious** with each passing decade. The **difficulty** of creating such a platform will be greatly **reduced** with each decade. Eventually--as the need becomes more obvious--and the difficulty decreases--these two curves will intersect--and **many independent efforts** to create a democratic platform will emerge.

These independent efforts may be based on different principles related to such things as the **communities** that are served, the **speed** and methods of **growth**, attitudes toward the commodity economy and the **ratio** of original content to copyrighted content which is expropriated. These independent efforts will probably both **compete** and **cooperate** with one another and, over time, they are bound to **merge**.

13. Walled gardens vs. urge to merge

It is useful to remember that in the early 1990's there were 3 main competing email services (Compuserve, Prodigy and AOL). It was not possible to send email from one service to another. For example, if you had friends on all 3 services, and wanted to send email to all of them, it would be necessary to pay a monthly fee and maintain a separate email address with all 3 services. This kind of arrangement was known as "**walled gardens**" and, inevitably, consumer demand

forced walled gardens to give way to a **universal email standard** that made it possible for spam from every corner of the globe to find its way to your inbox.

This "**urge to merge**" is important to understand when considering the current state of the many anti-capitalist political trends on the web today. For example, if you want to read articles on a particular topic (such as global warming, and what to do about it) from the *Socialist Resurgence* organization, you will need to go to their website--and look around. If you want to find articles on this topic from the *Communist Voice Organization*--go to their website. If you want to find articles from *Socialist Alternative* (either the US organization, or the unrelated Australian organization) ditto.

How about if you want to find articles on a topic like global warming by **all** organizations that are anti-capitalist in nature?

Well, I guess that is what Google is for--right?

Actually not.

The *World Socialist Website* (WSWS) has run articles [3] proving that Google has been actively blacklisting their site (and about 150 other websites) in order to favor more "authoritative" news sources. (Interestingly, google executives lied about this in testimony to Congress, and were caught in an article by a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. Go figure.)

And this, inescapably, brings us to the need for all anti-capitalist political trends which claim to represent the interests of the working class and oppressed (i.e.: marxist, anarchist, etc.) to find ways to **aggregate their content** in such a way that anyone searching for this kind of content can **easily find it all**.

If we cannot rely on Google to index and make searchable revolutionary anti-capitalist content--then we must do it ourselves. We are stronger when we combine.

14. All roads lead to aggregation

Our movement needs a **common database of articles** and content from **all trends**, as well as related tools--that will enable anyone to **easily find news** of struggles, mass actions, meetings, study groups, debates, key discussion threads, projects, people and organizations.

All roads forward lead to activists from all trends moving into **closer proximity** to one another, and in the direction of a **common community**, where they would be able to more easily **find one another**, and **engage in common projects** and work.

Our movement needs to get rid of walled gardens. This would also make it easier for activists to take part in the **discussion and debate** necessary for the independent movement of the working class to overcome the **reformist** and **sectarian** ideas and traditions which have **paralyzed** our movement. And this would make it easier to resolve the outstanding theoretical questions related to **the nature of the economic and political system which will replace capitalism.**

One of the key points Lenin made in "What Is To Be Done?" (1902) was about the need to get the work of all revolutionary organizations

on the **same page** (the page was called Iskra) -- so that their **strengths** and **weaknesses** could be seen **in the light of the sun**, and learned from or overcome.

We would do well to remember how it was that giants like Google and Facebook became big in the first place: it was by **aggregating information**--and becoming a place where people could go to find information created--not by Google or Facebook employees--but by many others.

The word "**aggregation**" is the media industry term for bringing together content from **multiple sources**. Aggregation is what we need today. When **news from all corners** of our movement is collected, indexed and made **easy to find**, the result is **transparency**.

But not everyone looks forward to transparency.

Many are afraid of it--and with good reason.

15. Ruling class afraid of transparency

Our ruling class is afraid of transparency for obvious reasons: its class rule is based on and requires a skillful combination of both (1) **force** and (2) **political deception**. It requires **both** force and deception in order to exercise a **stable form of class rule**.

In other words, history makes clear that, under modern conditions, our ruling class **cannot rule** (for a lengthy period) with **force alone**. **Political deception** is also **necessary**.

But the steady growth of transparency threatens to undermine and **dissolve political deception**, like a cup of brown sugar dumped into a large pot of boiling water.

This is the basis of **the emerging crisis of transparency** that confronts our ruling one percent (known, in traditional marxist terminology, as the **bourgeoisie**). This, fundamentally, is why **Google** and **Facebook** are cracking down on **anarchist** and **marxist** news services. And this is also why **Tiktok** and **WeChat** are being banned or muzzled--because their ability to reach more than 100 million in the U.S. with the perspective of the **Chinese government** would certainly "threaten national security" when the time comes for soldiers and sailors from many nations to **burn or drown** in the South China Sea.

16. Reformists afraid of transparency

But it is not only our ruling class that is afraid of transparency.

In the U.S., the political movements to the left of the Democratic Party are dominated by reformism of various kinds. **Reformism** is based on the idea that we should focus exclusively on making capitalism "less bad". Reformism is also often based on the idea that we can get rid of the system of capitalism--and replace it with something better--**one small step at a time**--and that in this way we can avoid waking up the guardians of capital (who are supposedly asleep) and provoking their full fury. Exactly how this magic will work--is best not thought about.

Reformists have a problem with transparency--because **their influence is based on a tacit alliance** (hidden or open, conscious or in the role of useful idiots) **with the ruling class--which often props them up**. Reformists trends and personalities often get political support or financial resources (i.e.: publicity, prestige, respectability, and entry to many doors) and get to advance their political agendas and the promotion of themselves as being responsible for the gains that have been won by the struggles of the masses. All this often follows if they play their cards right and do a sufficiently good job of promoting the illusions that the ruling class needs at a particular time.

Reformist trends have engaged in a certain amount of aggregation, as can be seen at **Counterpunch.org** or **CommonDreams.org**. But if you go to these kinds of sites, you will find that articles and content that go beyond a reformist perspective are either completely non-existent, or simply impractical to find amidst a sea of reformist illusions.

17. Cargo cults afraid of transparency

Beyond the mainstream liberal and reformist trends, there are **many small groups** which call themselves "marxist" or "socialist". Most of these groups are reformist in practice, although nearly all claim to stand for the overthrow of capitalism and the liberation of the working class.

Many (but not all) of these groups are trotskyist in origin. These groups often do a lot of good work to expose the nature of capitalism, **spread the word** about many struggles, organize **mass actions** and build the movement. That is one side of what they are. They also have another side--as manipulative **recruitment machines**--which engage in a **dog-eat-dog competition** with one another for the **warm, living bodies of activists** who are new on the scene and looking to hook up with some established group that knows how things work.

As part of their effort to survive in brutal competition with one another--these groups have a tendency is to create **a kind of mini-religion, called a cargo cult** [4] to inspire **confidence** within their ranks, and **glue** their groups together. And these cargo cults tend to be afraid of transparency because important components of their belief system would not survive in the face of protracted public discussion and debate--where anyone who aspired to **credibility** would be **expected to answer (rather than evade) important questions**.

18. What the WSWS is missing

The World Socialist Website relaunch appears to be missing **any recognition** that it is part of an ecosystem with many political trends--and that it has a responsibility to assist in what our movement needs--which is **the aggregation of content from all trends**, in order to:

- ▶ **gain greater readership for all trends** by making it easier to overcome the increasing censorship of the social media giants
- ▶ **cast a public light** on the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of all trends--with a view of resolving contradictions
- ▶ overcome the suffocating and poisonous influence of the **reformist** and **sectarian** ideas and traditions
- ▶ move activists into **closer proximity** to one another and help the formation of an open **community**
- ▶ increase **transparency** concerning our movement and the historic mission and destiny of the working class

19. Steps forward

With 25 million pages views a year, more than 125 thousand archived articles in 20 languages, industry-leading technology, and supporting organizations in many countries, the WSWS appears to have plenty of resources. This is good because, based on their announcement, the WSWS aspires to be "the focal point, in the international struggle for socialism, of theoretical education, political analysis, cultural enlightenment and the revolutionary organization of the working class".

I would like to help and--for this reason--have some specific suggestions for comrades who aspire to be the point of the spear:

(1) A public statement

First, I would like to see a **public statement** from the people who have the responsibility of determining the direction of the website--that they recognize that **our movement will benefit** if workers and activists have a **common website** where they can easily find articles, analysis, and easily searchable lists of public projects, people and organizations from **all anti-capitalist political trends**. (To be clear: I am talking about marxist, anarchist or progressive trends, not fascist or racist trends which sometimes falsely claim to be "anti-capitalist".)

(2) A public commitment

Second, I would like to see a **public commitment** to take some **modest steps** in this direction in a reasonable amount of time.

What are modest steps? And what is a reasonable amount of time?

My opinion is that an example of a modest step would be offering to add--to the WSWS database of articles--at least half a dozen articles per month from all anti-capitalist political trends that have a newspaper or website which is updated at least once a month. A reasonable amount of time in which to get this started, in my opinion, would be a year. This could, naturally, be expanded over time.

(3) A public forum

Finally, I would like to see the creation of a **public forum** of some sort, **open to all anti-capitalist activists**, with moderation that is both **democratic and transparent** (to minimize the inevitable abuse of moderator authority) that is focused on discussion and discovery of the **principles** which **must guide** the expansion and development of a website representing a **common democratic gateway to a common database** of content from all anti-capitalist trends. One obviously necessary principle, for example, would be that all **algorithms** on this platform, as well as the database itself, would be **public**.

20. Forest Gump explains cargo cults

It might be asked, if the steps I have outlined are so modest--why have I not done these things myself ? The answer, of course, is that I have made every effort, from before the time the internet exploded into public consciousness in the early 1990's, to work in these directions. I am still doing so, and I have *never* given up.

But it is also my responsibility to be realistic, and I must recognize that my tenure on this planet is drawing to a close, and I may have neither the time left, nor the life circumstances to do what must be done. **We all have a responsibility to be realistic.** It is a mistake to attempt to **substitute** our efforts for the efforts of a movement--or a social class.

Cargo cults are typically forged as a result of "impact shock", in which people are confronted with phenomena beyond their ability to fully understand or explain. People often respond, historically, by creating the best mixtures of fact and fiction they can, to fill the large gaps in their knowledge, and in which they can embed the material experience they do have with these phenomena. I am, of course, aware that many of my comments on cargo cults have not earned me popularity with small groups that (some believe) fit the description.

Can we untangle this? We can. Alexander cut the Gordian knot with a single stroke of his sword. We can do the same.

None of the small groups are **100 percent** cargo cult. Neither, I would argue, are any of them **zero percent** cargo cult. Rather, all of them are somewhere between one percent and 99 percent on a scale. And where they are positioned on this scale is not necessarily fixed. Rather, it changes over time.

I have my own experience in a cargo cult. It was, IMHO, one of the best of the cargo cults, and I remain intensely proud that I was part of

it because (unlike today) nothing better than a cargo cult was possible at that time. Mine was a maoist group, not a trot group, but many of the dynamics were identical. I marched in those shoes, and I carried on my shoulders and in my heart an unshakable determination to serve my class, the proletariat. I still do. I was a supporter or member of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA from 1978 until it dissolved itself in 1993--because it was unable to untangle the internal contradictions that tore it apart like a kitten in a woodchipper. In many ways, no matter what happens, those years remains the highlight of my life, and I formed bonds that were as deep as the bonds with my family.

We are now in the **21st century**. We now have the ability to productively engage with one another in ways that were never possible during the cultural revolution and the fire in Vietnam.

Things are more simple now.

The Tom Hanks character, **Forest Gump**, who is, in current parlance, developmentally disabled, famously recognizes the contradiction in his life that he must resolve by saying that "**stupid is as stupid does**".

To paraphrase Gump, we can say that **a cargo cult is as a cargo cult does**. We can measure whether a small group is as light as a feather, or as heavy as a mountain--by what it does. Does it live with us here, on planet **Earth**--or does it live in **denial**?

If a group attempts to **substitute** its efforts for the efforts of a movement--or a social class--then it lives in denial--and is acting like a cargo cult.

On the other hand, if a group works to **support** the aggregation of content from all anti-capitalist trends--onto **a common democratic platform**--with a common gateway to a common database--then it lives with us here, on planet Earth--and is not acting like a cargo cult.

Even Forest Gump could understand something as simple as this.

21. We all have a responsibility

We can, of course, hope that the WSWS responds in a positive way to the suggestions I have made, but their response is, most likely, up to a relatively small group of decision-makers inclined to continue doing what they have always done. In any event, we must recognize that it is (thankfully) certainly not the case that only the WSWS has the ability to help our movement move in the direction it needs to go.

I wrote this article because, more or less by chance, I stumbled upon the WSWS relaunch announcement--and was struck by the rather stunning gulf between their **lofty ambitions** and their **absence of any recognition** that they are not the only small group that often writes good articles, makes contributions to the struggle for what they call "socialism", and seeks to bring to the working class analysis, theory, enlightenment and organization.

Our movement includes numerous other similar organizations, with similar resources, as the WSWS--and also numerous other non-similar organizations, and projects. All organizations and projects have some role to play. All have strengths and weaknesses which must be understood, learned from, or overcome. **New revolutionary forces are awakening every day. We need to help all of them discover, understand, and link up with one another.**

► Where is **the list of organizations and projects** which serve the struggle against oppression and the independent movement of the working class? It does not exist. **We must create it.**

► Where is **the chart** of strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, criticisms and contact info for these organizations and projects? It does not exist. **We must create it.**

► **Where do we go** to participate in the discussion and debate which is necessary to understand the burning questions of our epoch which require answers? At present we can go to **a hundred thousand scattered, isolated, disconnected pigeon-holes**. We can do better than that. We need a common and universal **public arena**. We must create it.

The **organization of the working class and oppressed**, we must sooner or later recognize, will require a serious attitude toward the **organization of information**.

We must make skilled, determined and effective use of the splendid weapons of **information organization** and **information war** that the capitalist world has created. The deepening crisis of world capitalism, and the intensification of the class struggle, have made this an increasingly urgent imperative that will not go away.

22. What can you do?

You may ask yourself: "What can I do to help with what needs to be done?"

It may be helpful to recognize that there are two general kinds of tasks related to making use of the **organization of information** to help the revolutionary movement of the working class:

(1) **Working on projects** to organize information

(2) **Spreading the idea** that information must be organized

Not everyone has the ability to design, build and develop the kind of **information infrastructure** our movement needs. Most do not. But what everyone can do, in one way or another, is help to **spread the word** that things like this are important and must be done. Some can

write scripts or code for web pages or computers. Some can write words, or make videos, that move the hearts of humans. Some can create focused forums that can attract talent and thoughtful engagement. **All of this is important.**

We need to take a long term view. The **organization of information** to create political transparency and serve the struggle to replace the economic and political system of capitalism with something better--is not a job for an individual. It will be done by a social class--the proletariat. It will not be done overnight. It will unfold over decades.

At the very least, I would like to see **wider recognition and discussion of the principles I have raised in this article.** The domination of our movement by **walled gardens** must and will end. Many will **never understand** these principles. Many, until their dying day, will view their own project, or their own group, as the keeper of the sacred flame or (in more common language) "**the only game in town**". I have known these people. I have worked with them.

I have written a million words or more on these topics. Few have read these words. I have written software code for projects along these lines. These projects have failed. The road to success is paved with failure. With each failure we learn a little bit more.

If you have managed to read this far into this article, and you like it (or parts of it) let me know. I would like to hear from you. Thoughtful comments, questions and criticisms are all valuable to me--and this is what has made it possible for me to improve my writing.

I will be posting this to a few Reddit forums, and maybe a few websites. I will keep an index of forums where it is posted at the central "headquarters" for this article here:

<http://communism.org/node/4006>

Ben Seattle
September 2020

23. More to explore

- ▶ **The Gathering Storm** (September 2020)
Blood in the streets and the intensifying social media war
<http://communism.org/node/4004>
- ▶ **Spartacus Ex Machina** (November 2017)
An invincible weapon will connect every part of the proletarian mind
https://warforquadranttwo.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/sex_machina.pdf
- ▶ **Democratic Algorithms for the Proletarian Mind**
What principles must guide the democratic social media platform in our future? (June 2020)
<http://communism.org/node/4002>
- ▶ **Red and Green Projects: Work and Play**
Letter to a tech worker re: prototype projects (September 2020)
<http://communism.org/node/4005>

Notes

- [1] **<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2020/09/18/wsws-s18.html>**
- [2] Orwell (1946): "We are all capable of believing things which we know to be untrue, and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually, it is possible to carry on this process for an indefinite time: the only check on it is that sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield,"
- [3] **<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/11/18/pers-n18.html>**

[4] For many years, I thought that I had actually coined the term "cargo cult Leninism", after being inspired by Richard Feynman's speech on "cargo cult science" in the wake of the collapse of the group to which I had dedicated my life, but I eventually found out that this term was used, in the 1960's, by Irish trotskyists to describe stalinists. I guess very few things are truly original.

-- Appendix --

**Michael Reinoehl would be alive today
if we had a better public network**

Michael Reinoehl would almost certainly be alive today if activists had the kind of common public network that they need.

Michael made headlines after shooting, on August 29 in downtown Portland, a supporter of Patriot Prayer (one of Trump's racist gangs) which had sent hundreds of goons to attack anti-racist activists all day [MR-1] with the complicity of the (supposedly neutral) Portland police (who had been ordered to be absent in order to give a free hand to the racists).

The attacking thug whom Michael shot, Aaron Danielson, had been strapped and literally "loaded for bear". Danielson had been **spraying bear mace** when his fun day came to a sad end. He held a **metal baton** in his left hand. A **loaded Glock** was strapped to his hip.

Hours before being shot by a federal police task force, days later near Tacoma, Michael gave a video interview [MR-2] in which he said "it was a free-for-all, and the police were letting it happen" and explained

that his actions had been in self-defense--but that he had not turned himself in because he feared that the police would kill him in custody.

Witness reports are conflicting, but the most detailed report, from a 39 year old ordained minister [MR-3], said that the police had opened fire on sight--without giving Michael a chance to surrender, while he was holding a cell phone in one hand, and eating a gummy bear with the other.

Generally, this kind of "shoot on sight" operation is called an "extrajudicial execution". In more common language, it is called murder. There seemed to be plenty of cops and bullets involved, but conveniently for their story, no bodycams or dashcams were running.

Had Michael lived, a competent **political defense** in court would have likely caused a sensation in the age of social media, on the scale of the trial of the **Chicago 7** in 1969 [MR-4], and ended up **putting on trial the entire system of bourgeois "justice"**. In particular, a political defense in trial (i.e.: which prioritized political exposure rather than an narrow focus on verdict) would have helped **additional millions** to understand the **hidden partnership and coordination** between the police and Trump's racist gangs.

But it is important to understand the bitter truth that it was not simply the cops who killed Michael--but the **lack of reliable advice**.

Is it **really true** that the cops would have been able to murder Michael in custody? **Not necessarily**. It could not be ruled out--but it would not be so easy.

Certainly the cops would have **wanted** to kill him--but it would have been **difficult and awkward** to do so--once he was in custody--because by this time Michael was **so well known**.

Murdering Michael in custody would likely have created a bigger scandal than the mysterious death in custody, last year, of the notorious Jeffrey Epstein--who had a phone book full of billionaires

who wanted him dead. (Epstein's racket had been to give underage sex slaves to the extremely wealthy--and to political power brokers--with hidden video cameras capturing everything for blackmail and favors.)

If Michael had surrendered, accompanied by his lawyer, it would have been embarrassing for our ruling class to kill him--because **our ruling class needs political deception--and cannot rule without it**. The police cannot simply do whatever they want--anytime they want--because **our ruling class needs to keep them on a leash** in order to maintain a certain level of **necessary illusions**.

This kind of **knowledge** of how **class politics** work (knowledge that almost certainly would have **kept him alive**) is well known to many movement veterans--but was clearly not known to Michael.

But Michael **would have known** this if our movement had the kind of **public information network** which it needs. Even while on the run--he would have been able to see public messages on the network from experienced and trusted sources who would have explained these things. **Such an information network does not exist at present**.

Notes for Appendix

[MR-1] Videos on twitter by journalist Sergio Olmos, showing the total absence of police as right wing gangs use pepper spray and aim a gun at protesters in Portland:
<https://twitter.com/MrOlmos/status/1297273640052912128>

[MR-2] Vice video interview with Michael Reinoehl, hours before he was shot on sight by police:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsDWXx5tYfk>

[MR-3] (Washington Post) "Police shot Portland slaying suspect without warning or trying to arrest him first, witness says"
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/09/10/reinoehl-portland-antifa-killing-police/>

[MR-4] The Chicago 7: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Seven