

On World Wide Web's 29th Birthday, Its Inventor Warns of Threats to Digital Rights

"The fact that power is concentrated among so few companies has made it possible to weaponize the web," warns British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee

By [Jessica Corbett](#)

Global Research, March 13, 2018

[Common Dreams](#) 12 March 2018

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State](#)
& [Civil Rights](#)

On the 29th anniversary of the founding of the World Wide Web, British computer scientist [Tim Berners-Lee](#)—the inventor of the internet as we know it and a long-time advocate of digital rights—penned an open letter to call for stricter regulations of the major tech corporations that aim to control the web.

"What was once a rich selection of blogs and websites has been compressed under the powerful weight of a few dominant platforms," laments Berners-Lee, [writing](#) for the Guardian. "This concentration of power creates a new set of gatekeepers, allowing a handful of platforms to control which ideas and opinions are seen and shared."

"The fact that power is concentrated among so few companies has made it possible to weaponize the web at scale," he warns, pointing to how we have recently "seen conspiracy theories trend on social media platforms, fake Twitter and Facebook accounts stoke social tensions, external actors interfere in elections, and criminals steal troves of personal data."

Although internet users across the globe have "looked to the platforms themselves for answers," Berners-Lee reasons that a "legal or regulatory framework that accounts for social objectives may help ease those tensions."

His call for stricter rules to preserve the open internet follow the United States' [rollback](#) of federal net neutrality protections late last year—which Berners-Lee strongly [opposed](#), calling Federal Communications Commission chair [Ajit Pai](#)'s master plan to gut nationwide safeguards that prevented internet service providers from putting a premium on certain content "one of the greatest threats to the web in America."

Today, Berners-Lee runs the [World Wide Web Foundation](#), which works to "advance the open web as a public good and a basic right." In his piece for the *Guardian*, in addition to demanding more regulations, he also emphasizes the needs for closing the digital divide and facilitating more inclusive conversations about the internet's future.

He notes that the United Nations declared internet access a basic human right in 2016, and while this year we're reaching the point where [more than half](#) of the global population is online, people who are female, poor, or living in rural regions—or some combination of those characteristics—are still much less likely to have internet access.

Berners-Lee also declares that “today’s powerful digital economy calls for strong standards that balance the interests of both companies and online citizens,” and emphasizes the importance of “consulting a diverse cross section of society in the process” of rethinking how the web works now.

Challenging “the myth that advertising is the only possible business model for online companies, and the myth that it’s too late to change the way platforms operate,” he concludes, “on both points, we need to be a little more creative.”

*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License

The original source of this article is [Common Dreams](#)
Copyright © [Jessica Corbett](#), [Common Dreams](#), 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jessica Corbett](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca