Blockchain and the Web Are Coming Together, Says Berners-Lee

Sir Tim is big on blockchain.

By **Jeff John Roberts** October 17, 2017

Sir Tim Berners-Lee is a famous computer scientist and academic who invented the World Wide Web in 1989—so when he talks about new technologies it's worth paying attention.

Today, one of the topics on his mind is blockchain, a revolutionary way of creating permanent, tamper-proof records across a disparate network of computers.

Blockchain is most famously associated with the digital currency bitcoin but the technology is increasingly being used for record keeping by banks and retailers. It will also come to be used by more ordinary citizens in the near future, says Berners-Lee.

"The blockchain and the web will connect together in lots of interesting ways," he said on Tuesday at a Toronto conference hosted by Ripple, a blockchain payments company.

In a follow-up chat with *Fortune*, Sir Tim explained that web browsers serve as the primary way users experience most new technologies and that this will be the case with browsers.

"At the moment there are two interfaces coming to a browser near you. One is [blockchain-based] web payments sites. You've got the code to do all that already," he said. "Coming down the pipe hot on its its heels is web authentication. Instead of all those passwords, the browser will handle your identity."

Berners-Lee explained this means browsers like Chrome and Firefox will offer easy ways

for non-tech savvy people to use blockchain, allowing them to benefit from counterfeit-proof security features. (Crypto experts are already trying all sorts of blockchain browser experiments).

He did not elaborate on how specifically this will occur, but suggested it could involve a range of methods from biometrics to private cryptographic keys.

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Despite his misgivings about Google and other big tech companies—at the Ripple event he railed about such companies damaging the web in the name of advertising—Berners-Lee said using Google's Chrome browser for blockchain does not pose a privacy threat.

"Chrome is open source and inspectable — if there was a feeling Google was using its power to do nefarious things, people would switch to Firefox or Brave," he said. (Brave is a new browser designed to make it easy to use crypto-currencies).

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