

Information Compliance – Bill Passed to Demolish Free Speech

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › September 19, 2023, the U.K. passed a new law to censor online content. The Online Safety Bill has been described as “one of the most far-reaching attempts by Western democracy to regulate online speech”
- › The bill has been in the works for the last five years, again proving that online censorship is not something that sprang up in response to COVID
- › In addition to stricter regulations on pornography and content that promotes suicide and self-harm, “vaccine misinformation” and any other material that may be “harmful to health” is also barred under the bill
- › The European Union’s Digital Services Act (DSA) also recently took effect, and it too requires online companies to actively police their platforms
- › September 29, 2023, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) also announced all “online streaming services that offer podcasts” must now register and conform to regulatory controls

If you think freedom of speech has gone down the tubes, you haven’t seen the half of it yet. September 19, 2023, the U.K. passed a new law to “regulate” (read, censor) online content. The so-called Online Safety Bill has been described as “one of the most far-reaching attempts by Western democracy to regulate online speech.”¹

Interestingly, the bill has been in the works for the last five years,² again proving that online censorship is not something that sprang up in response to COVID. Governments have been steadily moving in this direction for a long time.

As reported by The New York Times,³ the bill forces online platforms to "proactively screen for objectionable material and to judge whether it is illegal, rather than requiring them to act only after being alerted to illicit content."

Outsourcing Censorship

Of course, we now know that flagging material for removal is how the U.S. government has **illegally circumvented constitutional free speech rights** for the past few years.

September 8, 2023, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld part of the lower court's injunction, banning the White House, surgeon general, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the FBI from influencing social media companies to remove "disinformation."⁴

Unfortunately, the appellate court also reversed, vacated and modified other parts of the original injunction,⁵ leaving the door wide open for certain federal agencies to continue their censorship activities.

Importantly, officials from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) were excluded,⁶ even though CISA has played a major, if not central, role in the government's censorship of Americans.

CISA partnered with the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP), later renamed the Virality Project,⁷ and in an Atlantic Council interview, EIP head Alex Stamos openly admitted that the partnership was set up to outsource censorship that the government could not do due to "lack of legal authorization."⁸

Chances are, other Western countries have been using similar kinds of censorship schemes up to this point. Now, however, the U.K. and EU have enshrined censorship in law, requiring companies to do their dirty work.

This is because, of course, someone will have to decide what kind of information is "legal" and what's not, and that decision is most likely going to come either from the government, or some unelected deep state organization like the World Health Organization.

If a similar law makes its way to the U.S., it would effectively constitute an end run around the Constitution, because the Constitution does not allow the government to outsource freedom of speech restrictions, which is basically what the Online Safety Bill does.

New Law Assumes Precognitive Abilities

Lorna Woods, a professor of internet law at the University of Essex, who helped draft the law, told The New York Times:⁹

"At its heart, the bill contains a simple idea: that providers should consider the foreseeable risks to which their services give rise and seek to mitigate – like many other industries already do."

One wonders whether she's talking about the endless warnings companies place on their products, like "Warning: Coffee may be hot!" or "Do not hold the wrong end of a chainsaw," "Do not operate while sleeping," or "Do not drive with sunshield in place."¹⁰ But can anyone truly foresee the risks of sharing information?

Sure, those who champion the bill highlight the risks of sharing pornography and information that might promote suicide, self-harm or eating disorders. That kind of information must either be restricted, using age-verification and other measures, or eliminated.

Few ought to have qualms about that, but we can be sure that that's not the primary aim of this bill. Ultimately, it will be used to stifle or ban information that is inconvenient to those in power. "Vaccine misinformation," for example, will be barred under the new bill, along with any other material that may be "harmful to health."¹¹

“ The World Health Organization’s pandemic treaty and the International Health Regulation (IHR) amendments designate the WHO as the final arbiter of truth regarding health.”

But who decides what might harm health? Those in power, of course, whether we can identify them or not. We know, however, that the World Health Organization’s pandemic treaty and the International Health Regulation (IHR) amendments designate the WHO as the final arbiter of truth regarding health.

Considering the WHO is owned by its funders, with Bill Gates topping that list, we can be assured that things like holistic health and accurate dietary information will end up on the chopping block, as it already has.

Incidentally, many argue that "anti-vaxxers" must be censored lest they profit from their misinformation, but recent research¹² actually found that "Contrary to expectations, websites promoted in pro-vaccine venues do more to monetize attention than those promoted in anti-vaccine venues." In other words, pro-vaccine sources are profiting from their information sharing to a far greater degree than those sharing information that is derogatory.

Judicial Processes Are Out the Window

We’ve also seen how the bill is already being used to silence specific individuals, such as Russell Brand, who is being accused of sexual improprieties and other abuses by four women he allegedly accosted between 2006 and 2013. Curiously, these accusations only arose after he started supporting Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s presidential campaign and warning about the global coup underway.

In September 2023, Dame Caroline Dinenage, chairwoman of the British Commons' Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee – whose husband was commander in the

British Army's psy-ops division¹³ — wrote a letter¹⁴ to Rumble asking them to demonetize Brand's channel.¹⁵

By then, he'd already been demonetized by YouTube, based on the sexual abuse allegations levied against him.¹⁶ YouTube reportedly justified their action saying Brand had violated its "creator responsibility policy."

As noted by The Gray Zone,¹⁷ "This marks the first time a content creator has been financially punished by the company for reasons other than the videos published on the site." A spokesperson for YouTube confirmed that the platform will now "take action" "if a creator's off-platform behavior harms our users, employees or ecosystem."

Rumble's chief executive Chris Pavlovski refused to demonetize Brand, stating, "We regard it as deeply inappropriate and dangerous that the U.K. parliament would attempt to control who is allowed to speak on our platform or to earn a living."¹⁸

That refusal may ultimately lead to Rumble being banned in the U.K. under the new law. It's even been suggested that Rumble executives may be at risk of being arrested should they visit the U.K.¹⁹ Brand, for his part, has accused the British government of "bypassing judicial process." Speaking in a live stream, Brand said:

"You know I've been demonetized on YouTube. You are aware that the government wrote to social media platforms to demand that I be further censored.

In a sense, the bypassing of judicial process, right to punitive measures, financial ones, seems like an interesting stance for a government minister to be suggesting to a big tech platform.

What we appear to be looking at here are a set of collaborating institutions that have an agenda, and pursue that agenda, even when in pursuing it they have to bypass, obstruct, or absolutely ignore existing judicial or regulatory bodies by moving straight to punitive measures."

It doesn't matter how you feel about Brand, or whether you believe the accusations against him. The danger inherent in these punitive measures should be self-evident to everyone.

Anyone can falsely accuse you of something and effectively destroy your ability to make a living if government and/or tech companies have the ability to act as judge and jury. Is that really the kind of society we want?

Many Companies Will Not Be Able to Comply

It's quite clear that many companies will not be able to comply with the new law. The Wikimedia Foundation, for example, which operates Wikipedia, has already said it'll be unable to do so, and may be blocked in the U.K. as a result.

This isn't a great loss, per se, considering [Wikipedia is an information warfare tool](#), but countless other information brokers will likely find that they are unable to predict the "foreseeable risks" of the information shared on their platform.

Compliance failures can cost companies up to \$22.3 million, or up to 10% of global revenue, whichever is higher. Company executives can also be held criminally liable if they fail to comply with investigative efforts and/or fail to comply with rules related to child safety and the sexual exploitation of children.

Considering the liabilities, those who decide to abide by the new law will likely follow the rule of "better safe than sorry" and use their censorship powers with an excessively heavy hand.

In the end, what we may be left with is state-sponsored propaganda and videos of puppies and kittens. Everything else will be too risky to keep on the platform, because who knows what information might become inconvenient next?

EU Requires Platforms to Police Speech Too

The new U.K. law is not alone in requiring censorship. The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) also recently took effect, and it too requires online companies to actively police their platforms. As reported by The Verge:²⁰

"Starting on August 25th, 2023, tech giants like Google, Facebook, Amazon, and more must comply with sweeping legislation that holds online platforms legally accountable for the content posted to them ...

Under the new rules, online platforms must implement ways to prevent and remove posts containing illegal goods, services, or content while simultaneously giving users the means to report this type of content."

On the upside, the DSA also bans targeted advertising and restricts ads targeting children. It also requires platforms to be more transparent about how their algorithms work, and requires "very large" platforms – any online company with more than 45 million monthly EU users – to allow users to opt out of profiling and personalization engines.

This includes Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Shapchat, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Bing and several others.²¹

On the other hand, the law also requires very large platforms to share data with researchers and authorities, and to cooperate with "crisis response requirements." The Digital Services Coordinator and the EU Commission will also have the power to "require immediate actions where necessary to address very serious harms."

Compliance failures can cost a company up to 6% of their global revenue, and repeated refusal to comply with rules or requests for action can result in suspension of the platform within the EU.

Canada Announces New Rules for Streaming Services

Canada is also upping the ante. September 29, 2023, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) announced all "online streaming services that

offer podcasts" must now register and conform to regulatory controls. As reported in an official press release:²²

"Today, the CRTC is advancing its regulatory plan to modernize Canada's broadcasting framework and ensure online streaming services make meaningful contributions to Canadian and Indigenous content ...

First, the CRTC is setting out which online streaming services need to provide information about their activities in Canada.

Online streaming services that operate in Canada, offer broadcasting content, and earn \$10 million or more in annual revenues will need to complete a registration form by November 28, 2023 ...

Second, the CRTC is setting conditions for online streaming services to operate in Canada. These conditions take effect today and require certain online streaming services to provide the CRTC with information related to their content and subscribership.

The decision also requires those services to make content available in a way that is not tied to a specific mobile or Internet service. A third consultation is ongoing. It considers contributions traditional broadcasters and online streaming services will need to make to support Canadian and Indigenous content."

Large-Enough Content Providers Must Register as Well

Initially, the CRTC promised that content providers who simply upload their podcasts to available broadcasting services would not be impacted, but that turned out to be another bait-and-switch. What's more, the CRTC conveniently didn't mention this detail in its press release. For those details, you have to read through the actual regulatory policy.²³ As reported by independent journalist Michael Shellenberger, October 2, 2023:²⁴

"For months, representatives of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government insisted that their plans to regulate Big Tech social media platforms wouldn't impact independent news outlets or podcasters ... But it turns out that the government is, in fact, going to regulate content providers, not just Big Tech social media platforms.

The government regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), announced on Friday that it would require registration by independent content producers, including online news companies and 'individuals that host podcasts on their own websites.'

The CRTC says that the law only covers media companies with \$10 million or more per year in revenue and that the information it is demanding is minimal ... But, notes Canadian legal analyst Michael Geist, 'The takeaway from the decision is obvious: registration is the first step toward regulation ... In fact, the rationale for the CRTC to include many of the services is that without such information, it is not well positioned to regulate.'

The Liberal Party plainly misled the public into thinking that platforms would only be regulated, not content providers. There are many independent media companies with over \$10 million annually in revenue that will be forced to register."

Canada's Online News Act

Earlier this year, Canada also rolled out its new Online News Act,²⁵ which requires "dominant platforms" to "compensate news businesses when their content is made available on their services." As a result, Facebook and Instagram ended up eliminating Canadians' ability to view any news on its platform, regardless of where the news originates from. As explained by Facebook, June 1, 2023:²⁶

"In order to comply with the Online News Act, we have begun the process of ending news availability in Canada ... News links and content posted by news

publishers and broadcasters in Canada will no longer be viewable by people in Canada ...

News publishers and broadcasters outside of Canada will continue to be able to post news links and content, however, that content will not be viewable by people in Canada ... People in Canada will no longer be able to view or share news content on Facebook and Instagram, including news articles and audio-visual content posted by news outlets."

Synchronized Censorship Push

What we're seeing is a synchronized push for more radical censorship, upheld by law, and while it's currently focused in the EU, Britain and Canada, we can be sure that it's coming to the U.S. as well.

It would be here already were it not for our Constitution, which is slowing things down. Still, the noose is tightening with each passing day, as the U.S. government is working overtime to figure out how to circumvent the highest law of the land.

There are no easy answers to this problem. One basic suggestion, however, would be to withdraw support from censorship-based platforms like YouTube, and support free speech platforms like Rumble instead.

Sources and References

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