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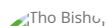
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TECHNOLOGY

Big Tech Demands Content Equality For ‘Net Neutrality,’ But Not For Alex Jones

Those who demanded Internet service providers treat all content equally are the very same platforms actively deciding what content is permissible for consumption.



By **Tho Bishop**
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Alex Jones and InfoWars’ loss of platforms such as YouTube and Facebook has a number of layers to it, including the responsibilities social media companies have to free speech, particularly as the lines between Big Tech and Big Government are **increasingly blurred**.

While I’ll leave others to debate those subjects, these developments and reactions to it provide clarity to another heated tech-related debate: the hypocrisy of “net neutrality” advocates. After all, there is a ton of overlap between those who advocated Title II regulation of the Internet and those celebrating Jones’s deplatforming. This is particularly true among the most powerful players in this debate, **including legislators** and leaders in the industry.

Consider, for example, the reaction from Big Tech to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) repeal of Title II regulation last December. Facebook's Sheryl Sandburg **published a statement saying**: "An open internet is critical for new ideas and economic opportunity... We're ready to work with members of Congress and others to help make the internet free and open for everyone."

Google encouraged online activists to "take action," in order to "protect the free flow of information and help make sure the Internet is available to everyone, everywhere." **Apple went so far as to say**: "An open internet ensures that hundreds of millions of consumers get the experience they want, over the broadband connections they choose, to use the devices they love, which have become an integral part of their lives. What consumers do with those tools is up to them — not Apple, and not broadband providers."

Fast-forward eight months later and now those who demanded Internet service providers treat all content equally are the very same platforms actively deciding what content is permissible for consumption.

This is hardly surprising to anyone who has paid attention to the debate. Google and Apple's lip service to the importance of protecting tech startups has never jived with their app stores serving **as the greatest filters** to what new products consumers can easily access. Tellingly, both have caved to government pressure whenever an app, **no matter how popular**, has frustrated legal authorities.

All the more repulsive about the tech giants' contributions to the net neutrality debate is how potentially dangerous their disingenuous crusade was to the future of Internet in America. After all, largely overlooked in FCC Chairman Ajit Pai's willingness to stand up to Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, and the other titans of tech is that it was a major victory for the future of

online service: 5G.

As industry analysts **like Peter Rysavy have explained**: "[N]etwork slicing, a key architecture for 5G, will allow an operator to provide different services with different performance characteristics to address specific use cases. It's critical that quality of service management be employed in 5G because 5G is

being designed for a wider range of use cases than prior technology generations and certain applications will need higher priority than other.”

Even with access to new spectrum and peak throughputs that will exceed 1 Gbps, 5G networks will need to manage latency, reliability, massive numbers of connections, and a mix of stationary and mobile users, Rysavy added.

“The United States has assumed global leadership in 4G and enjoys deep LTE penetration, leading smartphone platforms, and a vibrant application ecosystem. But globally, countries and companies are investing in and concentrating on what will come next with 5G. Constraining 5G with rules that unnecessarily undermine its potential is economic folly,” he said.

Tellingly, the imposition of FDR-era regulation on Internet service providers correlated with a significant **decrease in telecom investment**, stalling the **development of American 5G** at a time where America’s tech dominance is threatened **by rivals like China**.

This is not to say that private companies have an inherent responsibility to place “national interest” over their own bottom line. Companies have the right to behave cynically. At the same time, those same companies deserve to be exposed for such behavior, to allow consumers to react accordingly.

Net neutrality was about control and regulatory capture, not online freedom. Tech giants are now expecting that brand loyalty and market size will isolate them from the increased politicization of their content. That may not be **working out so well for Netflix**.

At the end of the day, in a market consumers are king. Will consumer apathy allow Silicon Valley to serve as America’s censor, or will we see a new kind of #WalkAway campaign?

Tho Bishop is an Assistant Editor for the Mises Wire. Prior to that he served as Deputy Communications Director for the House Financial Services Committee under Rep. Spencer Bachus and Rep. Jeb Hensarling.

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