

News Nanny: The Race to Censor Internet News

By

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How can you tell that internet censorship is really taking off? Easy. It's becoming a business model.

Steven Brill is raising [\\$6 million](#) to launch News Guard. This new service will rate news sites on their trustworthiness from green to red. Forget politically unbiased algorithms. The ratings [will be](#) conducted by "qualified, accountable human beings" from teams of "40 to 60 journalists." Once upon a time, journalism meant original writing. Now it means deciding which original writing to censor.

"Can trust be monetized?" [The Street's](#) article on News Guard asks. But it isn't really trust that's being monetized. It's censorship. It's doing the dirty work that Google

and Facebook don't want to do.

The Dems and their media allies have been pressuring Google and Facebook to do something about the "fake news" that they blame for Trump's win. The big sites outsourced the censorship to media fact checkers. The message was, "Don't blame us, now you're in charge."

Facebook made a deal with ABC News and the AP, along with Politifact, FactCheck and Snopes, to [outsource the censoring](#) for \$100K. When two of these left-wing groups declare that an article is fake, Facebook marks it up and viewership drops by 80%.

Facebook is reportedly considering adding the *Weekly Standard* to its panel of fact checkers. Even if that were to happen, it would be the difference between putting the *New York Times* without David Brooks or the *Times* with David Brooks in charge of deciding what you can read on Facebook. Adding a token conservative who is acceptable to the left doesn't change the inherent bias of the system.

Not only does the roster of fact checkers lean to the left, but so do its notions of what's true and false. For example, Snopes and Politifact both insist that General Pershing's forces never [buried the bodies of Muslim terrorists](#) with pigs. But [General Pershing specifically](#) stated in his autobiography, "These Juramentado attacks were materially reduced in number by a practice that the Mohamedans held in abhorrence. The bodies were publicly buried in the same grave with a dead pig."

Both [the New York Times](#) and [the Scientific American](#) reported on it at the time. Despite that Snopes rated this widely accepted historical fact as "False" and Politifact marked it as "Pants on Fire".

Snopes also recently marked a story that Christ Church in Virginia is removing a George Washington plaque as false even though the church publicly announced that it was doing so.

Politifact and Snopes are entitled to their incorrect opinions. The trouble is that they don't extend the same privilege to those they disagree with. And Google and Facebook promote fake fact checks while burying sites that discuss actual historical facts. The big internet companies don't want to get involved in all these arguments. But nor are they willing to let their users decide for themselves anymore.

And so Net Nanny for news has become an actual business model. Instead of protecting children from pornography, News Nanny protects adults from news. And from views outside the left's bubble.

By adopting the News Nanny model, Google and Facebook are treating their users like children.

The News Guard model is in some ways even more insidious than biased fact checking because it sets up lists of approved and disapproved sites. Google is rolling out something similar with its “knowledge panels” for publishers. Search for the *New York Times* and the panels will tell you how many Pulitzers the paper has won. Search for *Front Page Magazine* and the panel note describes it as, “Political alignment: Right-wing politics”. No note listing a left-wing political alignment appears in the panel for the *New York Times* despite its recent laudatory series about the Soviet Union and Communism.

The media never has an official political orientation. Not even when it’s cheering Communism. But its opponents and critics always have one. Follow Google’s link for *Front Page’s* political alignment and the top entry states, “Right-wing politics hold that certain social orders and hierarchies are inevitable”.

That’s a wholly inaccurate description of either *Front Page Magazine* or conservative politics in America. And it’s another example of how the fight against “fake news” by the left actually ends up producing it.

And it isn’t meant to stop there.

The Google Blog casually mentions that the panels will also list, “claims the publisher has made that have been reviewed by third parties”. You get one guess as to who those “third parties” will be.

Fact checking has become a pipeline to censorship. The big social and search companies outsource fact checking to third parties and then demonetize, marginalize and outright ban views and publishers that those third parties disagree with. Fact checks are no longer an argument. They’re the prelude to a ban.

Google and Facebook respectively dominate search and social media. When they appoint official censors for their services, those left-wing fact checkers become the gatekeepers of the internet.

And the internet isn’t supposed to have gatekeepers.

Senator Al Franken, of all people, [made that point](#) at the Open Markets Institute. OMI’s people have emerged as the leading opponents of big tech monopolies on the left.

“No one company should have the power to pick and choose which content reaches consumers and which doesn’t,” Franken said. “And Facebook, Google and Amazon,

like ISPs, should be neutral in their treatment of the flow of lawful information and commerce on their platform.”

There is no more obvious example of the lack of neutrality than Facebook and Google’s partnership with “fact checkers”. If Net Neutrality means anything, it should strike down Google’s partnership with Poynter’s International Fact-Checking Network and Facebook’s use of Snopes to silence conservatives.

When sites picked and chose content based on algorithms, they were deciding which content reached users based on what was likely to be popular. And, occasionally, based on their own agendas. Now they are picking and choosing which content reaches users based on political orientation. While the advocates for Net Neutrality rage against cable companies, Comcast and Charter aren’t engaging in political censorship. No matter how they disguise it, Google and Facebook’s news nannies are.

News Guard is an ominous warning that online censorship is becoming a viable business model as the big tech companies look around for someone else to do their dirty work for them. But subcontracted censorship is still censorship. And the only people impressed by the credentials of the “fact checkers” are those who share their politics. Unfortunately that covers the leadership of Google and Facebook.

Discussions about fake news often begin and end with “trust”. Major media outlets with Pulitzers are trustworthy. Major fact checking operations are also trustworthy. Even Snopes is somehow trustworthy despite its utter lack of professionalism, and its founders [accusing each other of embezzlement](#),

But “trust” has more than one meaning. We trust those people and organizations we like. And sometimes those organizations form a trust. And anyone who isn’t in, is untrustworthy.

Trust in the mainstream media has never been lower. Yet the big tech companies insist that mainstream media sources are the only trustworthy ones. They want us to trust them, because they don’t trust us.

The internet was a revolutionary environment that liberated individuals to make their own choices. Bloggers could compete with big media. Leaked emails could bring down a government. But the internet is becoming less free. Access is controlled by a handful of tech companies that keep getting bigger and bigger. The survivors of the scale wars will combine cable, content and commerce in new ways. And in a politicized culture, they won’t just signal their political views, they will enforce them.

If we don't fight now, ten years from now conservatives will be the rats in the walls of the internet.