

Mr R Dunster—written evidence (FEO0026)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into Freedom of Expression Online

1. *Is freedom of expression under threat online? If so, how does this impact individuals differently, and why? Are there differences between exercising the freedom of expression online versus offline?*

Yes, due to control of platforms by business, as opposed to control by democratically elected representatives. I see no difference between on- & off-line freedom of expression

2. *How should good digital citizenship be promoted? How can education help?*

By ensuring absolute lack of political bias in education, teaching how, not what to think, and emphasising STEM where things are provable.

3. *Is online user-generated content covered adequately by existing law and, if so, is the law adequately enforced? Should 'lawful but harmful' online content also be regulated?*

Yes, No.

4. *Should online platforms be under a legal duty to protect freedom of expression?*

Yes

5. *What model of legal liability for content is most appropriate for online platforms?*

Exactly as per other media

6. *To what extent should users be allowed anonymity online?*

To the same level as applicable off-line.

7. *How can technology be used to help protect the freedom of expression?*

By being content independent, within the law.

8. *How do the design and norms of platforms influence the freedom of expression? How can platforms create environments that reduce the propensity for online harms?*

Use of selective algorithms to prioritise certain views to certain groups, under commercial sponsorship or for other reasons, (etc etc) diminishes FOE.

9. *How could the transparency of algorithms used to censor or promote content, and the training and accountability of their creators, be improved? Should regulators play a role?*

I suspect it is impractical, or indeed impossible, to make algorithms transparent, to either the layman or specialist.

10. *How can content moderation systems be improved? Are users of online platforms sufficiently able to appeal moderation decisions with which they disagree? What role should regulators play?*

By making them obey law & nothing else. (To all 3 questions)

11. *To what extent would strengthening competition regulation of dominant online platforms help to make them more responsive to their users' views about content and its moderation?*

A lot. Compare recent demise of Parler.

12. *Are there examples of successful public policy on freedom of expression online in other countries from which the UK could learn? What scope is there for further international collaboration?*

Not sufficiently aware of other countries practice in detail to comment. International collaboration will, however, tend to diminish the application of local law, and thus reduce democratic control.

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