

Written evidence submitted by Mr Downing (OSB0156)

One suspects that the bill will be an attempt to muzzle free speech. The right to Free speech must be absolute or there is no free speech. In EU law there is no right to free speech – the right has to be absolute and therefore the reality of the situation is that there is NO free speech, just a long list of things that cannot be said according to the EU.

The right to absolute Free Speech as a fundamental British Value must be enshrined in Law and so called hate Crime Laws that oppose free speech must be repealed as they are not compatible with Free Speech a fundamental British Value.

My understanding is that the Americans have an absolute right to free speech so why can't we have the same rights as the Americans. It is extremely corrosive for the economy and political health and well being of the UK when citizens can not speak freely. America which has free speech thrives whilst the UK which bans free speech is withering economically and nationally .

David Cameron's Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism in 2013 stated that freedom of speech was a Fundamental British Value. The same report said that "the government has defined extremism as: "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values." So opposition to free speech would therefore be extremism. Parliament should be looking at any groups trying to block free speech, who according to the Cameron Report would appear to be extremists. Is Parliament giving a platform to free speech blocker extremists? Is government money being given to extremist groups who are trying to block free speech ? If so the government must take immediate action against these extremists.

The Bill should make clear that any attempt to block or limit free speech on line or indeed anywhere is extremism and opposition to fundamental British Value. The Bill should make it a criminal offence for any individual, group or company to block free speech or attempt to block free speech.

The Bill should make it a criminal offence for any social media to block free speech or block individual user accounts. Any social media firm that bans or limits free speech in any form thorough censoring content through to blocking user accounts should be prevented from operating in the UK, fined 50% of their annual profits and the companies officers imprisoned for life

The proposed wording in the draft bill may well be worded widely so as to catch any and all speech and so will have a chilling effect on free speech as much speech could be construed as breaking the bill. This is unacceptable.

OFCOM - In my opinion OFCOM, based on my dealings with OFCOM, have failed to regulate the bbc properly and it would therefore be a nonsense to give OFCOM the task of internet censors and adjudicators when OFCOM have shown in my opinion and based on my dealings with OFCOM ,that OFCOM do not appear to regulate the bbc properly. (I am happy to give parliament examples of just how useless OFCOM appear to be!)