

Democrats Who Want to Cancel Fox News

A House subcommittee recently held a hearing on “Disinformation and Extremism in the Media.” Since nobody’s for disinformation and extremism in the media, what could be wrong with such a congressional hearing?

For one thing, despite its noble sounding title, the hearing is just the latest item on the progressive agenda – an agenda to stifle or flat out shut down conservative voices in America.

Why, for example, would Democrats hold a congressional hearing on the subject when Congress can’t pass laws to curtail disinformation or so-called extremism in the media? There’s that pesky Constitution and its First Amendment that would get in the way of any such attempt to suppress speech. Even progressives know that.

But what if government – in this case Democrats who, to put it bluntly, don’t like conservative news organizations – could get private industry to do its dirty work? What if, hypothetically of course, Democrats could get Big Tech to shut down conservative voices they don’t like and then say, “Our hands are clean. We didn’t abridge anybody’s First Amendment rights?”

Well, it’s not so hypothetical. What led up to the hearing was a letter from two California Democrats, Anna Eshoo and Jerry McNerney. Their letter was sent to the CEOs of 12 cable and satellite providers – the tech companies that carry all sorts of cable TV shows – everything from the Food Network and the Golf Channel to Fox News.

Let’s just say it wasn’t the food or golf that Democrats had in mind when they wrote their letter that led to their

hearing. Rather they were concerned about what they called the “right-wing media ecosystem” which supposedly was spreading “lies” and “disinformation” that lead to “insurrection.”

Here’s how the two California Democrats opened their letter: “Our country’s public discourse is plagued by misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and lies.”

And here are a few questions they asked the cable providers:

- “What moral or ethical principles (including those related to journalistic integrity, violence, medical information and public health) do you apply in deciding which channels to carry or when to take adverse actions against a channel?”
- “Have you taken any adverse actions against a channel, including Fox News, Newsmax and OANN, for using your platform to disseminate disinformation related directly or indirectly to the November 3, 2020, elections, the January 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection, or COVID-19 misinformation?”
- And, “Are you planning to continue carrying Fox News, Newsmax and Oann?” And, “If so, why?”

When Republicans on the committee saw this as a not-so-subtle end run to subvert the Constitution and shut down news they don’t approve of, Congresswoman Eshoo had an answer: “The First Amendment, my friends, starts with four words: Congress shall make no laws.” In case anyone didn’t catch her drift, the point was that she had no intention of proposing legislation to silence conservative news outlets; she was merely asking “strong, important questions.”

But as one of the witnesses, law professor Jonathan Turley, said: “Making a statement and putting a question mark at the

end of it doesn't change the import of the statement." In other words – if other words are even needed –when a Member of Congress “asks” a question such as, “Are you planning to continue carrying Fox News” or “what moral principles” go into your decision on which channels to carry, they aren't really questions. They're words to the wise: *Carry Fox and other conservative news organizations at your own risk. We can't regulate the news business, but we sure can regulate your businesses.*

It's called intimidation, hiding behind a very thin veil.

I watched the entire hearing because Bill O'Reilly wanted my views about it on his internet news program. I told Bill that several things troubled me. First, that since Democrats understand they can't shut down Fox News, what they essentially were trying to do was out source the job to Big Tech. An attack on free speech any way you look at it.

But what also troubled me was the sanctimony, the belief that liberals have clean hands when it comes to disinformation, that conservative media alone traffic in conspiracy theories and lies.

For more than two years it was liberal cable news channels that kept telling us that President Trump was in cahoots with the Russians, that he was either a Kremlin stooge or maybe even a spy.

Did that constitute the plague of “misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and lies” that the two left wing Democrats from California wrote about in their letter?

What about Democrat Congressman Adam Schiff who, at the time, was the ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee and is now its chairman? He went on television and said he had “more than circumstantial evidence” that Donald Trump's associates colluded with Russia while the Kremlin was

interfering with the 2016 presidential election.

The special prosecutor found no such evidence but that didn't stop liberal media cable channels like CNN and MSNBC from having him on as a regular guest to bash the former president.

Was that something the Democrats who were so concerned about disinformation were worried about? Or was it only conservative voices they wanted to shut down?

One congressman, Frank Pallone, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, acknowledged the obvious – that the First Amendment protects speech that is “controversial.” But he said there's a difference between “controversial” speech and “misinformation that causes public harm.”

Fair enough. But who determines what constitutes public harm? And who decides what speech causes it? Democrats – who at the moment control, the House, the Senate, and the White House?

As an editorial in the Wall Street Journal put it: “Would two years of false Democratic narratives about Russian collusion with Mr. Trump qualify as public harm? How about apologies for riots in the streets last summer?”

The left already controls most of the mainstream media. Liberal journalists overwhelmingly dominate newsrooms at CNN, MSNBC, the three major broadcast networks, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and a lot of other places. But that apparently isn't enough. Too many on the left won't rest until they shut down the few conservative outlets that exist on TV.

But be assured, they're not doing it for selfish reasons. They're not authoritarians. They're doing it to make America a better place, a more civil place, a place where we all could get our news without misinformation and

disinformation and lies.

If you doubt any of that, just ask them. They'll gladly tell you how well meaning and selfless they are, how they don't want to censor anybody – except maybe those conservatives who disseminate “unacceptable” information.

Progressives, bless their hearts, are nothing if not sanctimonious.