

# Incentivizing Censorship: A Snitch in Every Skull. “The Totalitarian Virus”

Anti-war academic Dr. TJ Coles is at the center of two raging controversies over freedom of speech - and one overarching assault on human rights

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*An informational iron curtain is coming down across the West, and its architects are determined to make examples out of those who refuse to pick a side.*

*Our Democracy™ has adopted a zero-tolerance policy for pollution of the information ecosystem, and the Thought Police are standing by to halt rogue infodemics in their tracks, lest the people lose trust in their institutions.*

*Dr. Tim Coles, a freelance writer and postdoctoral researcher until recently at the University of Plymouth didn't realize he was in their crosshairs until he found himself locked out of his university email account in October. Tech support was no help; department staff refused to talk to him, closing ranks and sending him a threatening email demanding he cease contact. Clearly, he had violated some unwritten law. But what?*

The chain of emails that had culminated in his removal only raised further questions about why an apparent stranger whom Plymouth has refused to name – a university employee, he suspects – had complained about his writing for Australian magazine Nexus to his old PhD examiner.

In a Kafkaesque turn, the complaint lacked a single concrete accusation of wrongdoing that Coles could defend himself against, instead equivocating around familiar “conspiracy theorist” tropes. At any rate, no one had thought to consult Coles, perhaps believing him to be a disgruntled ex-student trading on his old university email rather than a researcher whose work at the university was funded by an outside trust and had nothing to do with his political writing. Rather than pause for clarification, his PhD examiner appeared to jump in with both feet, urging tech staff to help get Coles “off [the university's] books.”

While a prolific writer on many controversial topics – US funding and training of neo-Nazis in Ukraine, the West’s neocolonial plunder of Africa under the guise of fighting terrorism, and Big Pharma’s giant power-grab under cover of Covid-19 unholy alliance of Big Pharma and Big Tech amid the coronavirus outbreak are just a few – Coles believes he ran afoul of the university censors with a series of articles about intelligence agencies blackmailing people with child sexual abuse that ran in Nexus not long before the cancellation effort began. That particular subject has a tendency to get journalists killed, and Coles wonders if his ejection from Plymouth might be a warning shot from groups displeased with his inquiries. He acknowledges, however, that the timing may be a coincidence – Hope Not Hate and other intelligence-controlled censorship advocates were apparently trying to have Nexus banned in the UK around the same time for its publication of unorthodox views on Covid-19.

While he believes the evidence in the email chain is enough to prove wrongdoing by the university, Coles couldn’t even file a complaint through the normal channels, as his inquisitors had roped the complaints department into their conspiracy by including them in the email chain. He has considered releasing the messages publicly as a last resort, but first plans to employ an outside arbitrator and give the System one last chance – more than he was given, at any rate.

## Lessons from The Lobby

Coles is far from the first to be booted from a British university campus for thought crime. He sees parallels between his case and that of David Miller, the University of Bristol sociology professor who was subjected to a ferocious [academic inquisition](#) and ultimately drummed out of his post in late 2021 after the Board of Deputies of British Jews deliberately misinterpreted comments he had made about Israel weaponizing Jewish students abroad. The university’s Union of Jewish Students had been attacking him for years before seizing upon the supposedly discriminatory comment, which they only heard because they had sent in an activist ‘spy’ to monitor one of his classes – ironically validating the professor’s claims better than his own arguments could have.



Like Coles, Miller was never directly confronted by his accuser, who opted for mealy-mouthed [pseudo-accusations](#) (“conspiracy theorist,” “inciting hatred”) over potentially-disprovable crimes. Like Plymouth, Bristol took the side of the accuser against its employee almost reflexively. Former Labour MP Chris Williamson, himself a victim of the Israeli lobby’s devastating smear machine, joined the Support David Miller campaign in warning that the university’s failure to stand up for the professor would only encourage “bad faith actors” to pursue further censorship.

Shortly before the lobby finally convinced Miller's university to mount an investigation into his supposed bigotry, he observed that such pressure tactics were imported from the Israel lobby in the US and [pointed out](#) that if any other foreign lobby attempted to wage such total war on its critics, they would be "laughed out of the room." But Coles' experience suggests other groups have taken lessons from the Israelis – and that Williamson's warning was prescient.

Academic "cancel culture" is a well-known scourge of American campuses, where careless tweeting costs lives and professors can be axed for using the [wrong pronouns](#). But while most discussion of the phenomenon centers on the targeting of conservative professors, it has targeted left-wing heterodoxy with equal fury, as tenured New York University media studies professor [Mark Crispin Miller](#) discovered when a student demanded his firing via Twitter after taking offense to a discussion questioning the utility of masks in his 2020 class on Propaganda.

Like Coles and the other Miller across the pond, Miller was attacked by university colleagues with vague allegations of "attacks on students and others in our community," "aggressions and microaggressions," and "explicit hate speech" and an investigation was launched behind his back even in the absence of any specific forbidden act. Administrators went one step further and contacted all his students to remind them of the CDC's mask guidance, lest their fragile minds have been corrupted by the conspiracy theorist in the classroom. They couldn't fire him – he was tenured, after all – but they did their best to make his life so miserable that he would leave, forbidding him from teaching his beloved Propaganda class, and he has been on sabbatical since.

Even Kenneth Roth, the former executive director of Human Rights Watch, was [recently denied](#) a fellowship at the Carr Center for Human Rights, part of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, on the basis of wrongthink – what its dean described as his "anti-Israel bias." Roth has toed the line on foreign policy groupthink elsewhere, dutifully demonizing Putin, Assad, Trump, and so on as the needs of Empire demanded. But his refusal to ignore Israel's increasingly bold apartheid policies got him the David Miller treatment despite years of faithful service. *If Roth isn't safe, many academics have begun to wonder, what the hell are they going to do to me?!*

## Will Censor for Food

While Coles questions if universities were ever really the freethinkers' utopia so many academic misfits yearn for, there is no denying groupthink has tightened its hold in recent years. While an academic might once have been left alone to research controversial subjects on his own time so long as he didn't embarrass his employer, this laissez-faire approach has been replaced by an administrative panopticon that is both hyper-responsive and reflexively condemnatory – a "cottage industry of shutting people down," in the words of its recent target. Censorship has been outsourced from the state and its corporate minions to "academics and think tanks who are given a well-funded government hammer so they see everything as a nail of disinformation," Coles explains. Not simply salaried, they are financially incentivized to bag-and-tag as many pieces of "disinformation" as they can, essentially bounty hunters for inconvenient truths, enabling a much tighter, more granular control of information than was ever possible under a traditional totalitarian model.

These programs and campaigns – with names like Integrity Initiative, Center for Countering Digital Hate, Trusted News Initiative – initially appear to be independent nonprofits that just

happen to share a common devotion to fighting fake news.

However, their cooperation is more than superficial, with many of the same entities ultimately directing their actions as they work together to artificially muscle the discourse in the desired direction, choking off competing narratives while maintaining plausible deniability regarding their connections to the state.

In this model of soft totalitarianism, the dissident is not so much ordered to cease publishing objectionable ideas, or even threatened with execution or creative torture. He is merely subjected to mounting insults, 'nudged' in certain directions, and gradually stripped of resources, especially any public platform he may have had in accordance with his refusal to follow the rules. Amid this complex ballet of carrot and stick, he is constantly reminded that these are *his* decisions, making him (in his own mind, at least) a willing participant in his own spiritual suffocation.

Fact-checkers, once mere newsroom employees tasked with verifying the details of major stories, have been artificially elevated into a caste of gatekeepers, deemed impartial arbiters of truth even as their donor lists burst with conflicts of interest from Pierre Omidyar to Bill Gates to George Soros. This veneer of independence allows them much greater latitude than any equivalent government body, as the ignominious collapse of the US' Disinformation Governance Board last year proved. This official Ministry of Truth, which would have operated out of the Department of Homeland Security, was a bridge too far even for the American media establishment, which had long since embraced its unofficial equivalent censoring tweets and Facebook posts to keep the world safe for democracy.



All it took to get English-speaking countries to accept the need for these newly-minted (the International Fact Checking Network was only launched in 2015) cognitive babysitters was for a few pathological liars to blame Trump's 2016 electoral victory and Brexit on Russian disinformation.

Never mind that neither hypothesis was ever substantiated, or that both have [since](#) been [thoroughly discredited](#) – unfiltered access to information has joined the lengthy list of threats to social harmony, and the fact-checkers, having tasted power, are unlikely to return to the newsroom. Given that a free press is integral to a functioning democracy, it goes without saying that any regime looking to dismantle the latter would want to get the former out of the way.

## New Dawn in Old Bottles

No sooner had Coles been chased out of his university for his writing in one Australian alt-media magazine then he was engulfed in a censorship firestorm over another. An article appeared earlier this month in New Zealand news outlet Stuff excoriating bookstore chain Whitcoulls for carrying the [latest edition](#) of New Dawn, a publication which proudly bills itself as a “forum for alternative, non-mainstream ideas that question consensus reality.” Stuff’s coverage berated the bookstore for exposing unsuspecting customers to the jungle of “conspiracy theories” barely restrained within its pages (*full disclosure: I have also contributed writing to New Dawn*), focusing its rage on Coles’ “The curious case of Brenton Tarrant,” about the Christchurch mosque shooter.

When Whitcoulls did not immediately capitulate, “disinformation expert” Kate Hannah was called in to warn Kiwis who picked up the magazine that they were enabling “dark agendas” seeking to “destabilize liberal democracy.” Reading Coles’ article wasn’t just engaging in wrongthink, but actually *committing a crime*, she [explained](#), because the article included information on how to access the illegal-in-New-Zealand helmet-cam video Tarrant recorded while shooting his way through the mosque. Just reading about where to find the video might run afoul of hate speech laws, she mused in a [radio interview](#).

Of course, the article includes no such instructions, nor does it – as Hannah claimed – claim Tarrant didn’t shoot anyone. Coles is baffled by the disinfo expert’s disinfo, but suspects the reason they didn’t include his name (standard practice in establishment hit-pieces) in the pressure campaign is that he could justifiably sue for libel. But the mere threat of legal repercussions was sufficient to keep 99.9% of Kiwis away from the forbidden magazine, and perhaps sensing no sales in its future, Whitcoulls finally [pulled the issue](#) from its shelves.

New Zealand’s size and isolation make it a perfect experimental laboratory, and the other Four Eyes haven’t hesitated to use it as such. Nor have the Israelis, whose [operation](#) was exposed during the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. The 2019 shooting that launched the current touchless torture regime was preceded as such events often are by a series of odd ‘coincidences’ and foreshadowings. Just a few months before the massacre, a group of American survivors of the Parkland, Florida high school shooting [visited the city](#) to discuss “living through a tragedy” with their Kiwi counterparts; two Parkland survivors and a Sandy Hook survivor allegedly [committed suicide](#) in the months following the mosque killings. A [police drill](#) just happened to be taking place near the fleeing gunman, allowing participants to “heroically” capture him in what media dutifully described as a “hell of a coincidence.”

The speedy gun-grab that followed the tragedy left citizens helpless in the claws of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and the subsequent clampdown on the internet was [unprecedented](#) in any other western “democracy,” with prison sentences meted out for merely [sharing a link](#). Ostensibly to prevent anyone from reading Tarrant’s manifesto or watching the curiously videogame-like footage of the killings, the rules had the effect of banning access to entire video archives, international forums, and other information resources that might have helped the country’s residents make sense of what had just been done to them, and they were designed to be copied by the other four Eyes – or any other country that should want them.

While all five Eyes adopted unprecedented controls on social media during Covid-19, New Zealand went much further than its peers in controlling the actual publication of news. In



March 2020, facing rumors that lockdown was imminent, Ardern [warned](#) upstanding citizens to avoid all unauthorized sources of information, urging them to stick with the government's official site as "your single source of truth."

The message didn't age well – New Zealand was [locked down](#) within the week – but her point had gotten across loud and clear. Arrested while protesting Auckland's return to lockdown in 2021 over just three "cases," popular radio host and pandemic dissident Vinny Eastwood was only released on the conditions that he remain under house arrest 24/7 and stay off the internet – draconian requirements for a man who made his living live-streaming. He was later [permitted back online](#), but only on the condition that he not advocate against Covid-19 restrictions – a deliberately subjective line in the sand meant to encourage self-censorship above all.

While the media establishment overflowed with praise for Ardern over her iron-fisted suppression of the population – er, pandemic – no one has thought to ask why, if the West questions all Covid-19 stats coming out of China due to government control of all information sources, they believed the numbers coming out of New Zealand. Even news sites like Stuff, which describes itself as "fiercely independent," are actually public-private partnerships – in this case funded by the New Zealand government and the Google News Initiative, powered by the bonanza of helicopter money that was dumped on the news media in 2020 to fight the "infodemic" of Covid-19 "disinformation."

That the campaign against New Dawn was no organic outrage was clear – Coles' article is the last in the issue, and the likelihood of an indignant civilian pawing through 70 pages of conspiracy contraband just to find something they can claim is illegal approaches zero. Its favorable result means it will likely become the [blueprint](#) for future book-burning campaigns.



But why go after a couple of obscure Australian conspiracy magazines?

Especially in New Zealand, but increasingly in the US and Europe, Big Tech no longer allows the average user to stumble upon the kind of content published by New Dawn or Nexus.

Even non-Google search results from once-reliable alternatives like DuckDuckGo and Brave have been scrubbed clean of all deviations from the establishment line on topics like Covid-19 or the war in Ukraine, let alone the Christchurch shooting, and as Coles remarked, the censorship is even creeping through time into the Wayback Machine, the internet researcher's go-to that once contained archives of much of the internet dating back decades – but now increasingly turns up error pages or sloppily retconned [fact-checks](#). However, Kiwis browsing at Whitcoulls had at their fingertips a powderkeg of new information, rendered all the more volatile by three years spent in informational quarantine. Just as a person locked down for months will see her immune system suffer for lack of outside stimulation, any novel pathogens hitting her much harder when she finally goes outside, the Good Citizen who imbibed only Ardern-approved data for three years will likely be unable to muster even the slightest argument against whatever outrageous claims she finds in New Dawn and perhaps become lost to the weak grasp of establishment propaganda forever.

There's an easy solution to this problem, should New Zealand want to solve it. Teach children to think critically, instead of the dumbed-down "media literacy" programs being promoted by every self-proclaimed "disinfo expert" this side of PropOrNot. Thought-stopping "[information hygiene](#)" techniques (Google it! Look it up on Wikipedia!) and reflexive [appeals to authority](#) (only a scientist can interpret that study for you!) do not help an individual resist persuasion. But a population armed with the ability to recognize an official lie and dismantle it would not allow themselves to be locked down over a few cases of a disease they were almost 100% certain to survive anyway – so of course New Dawn couldn't be permitted to question Christchurch. It is the (shaky) foundation on which Ardern's hastily-constructed police state was built. As rumors fly about her surprise resignation on Thursday and the media establishment rends its garments over how "unfairly" this "icon of many" was treated by "[far-right extremists](#)," it seems clear her departure will be weaponized to further crack down on the increasingly nebulous specter of "hate speech."

## Replacing Replacement Theory

Americans who believe the New Dawn affair could only have happened in an unarmed, isolated nation like New Zealand should pay attention to what their Congress is up to. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) earlier this month [introduced a bill](#) that would criminalize the publication of "antagonism based on 'replacement theory'" and "hate speech that vilifies or is otherwise directed against any non-White person or group" on social media if it can be said that the perpetrator of a "white supremacy inspired hate crime" had encountered the material before committing the crime – or that if they *had* encountered the material, it could conceivably have motivated them to take such actions.

Without bothering to define such critical terms as "hate speech" or even "replacement theory," often trotted out for effect when the speaker needs to strike an emotional chord, the bill leapfrogs pre-crime to a total reversal of cause and effect. A content creator can be charged with conspiracy to commit a white supremacy motivated hate crime so long as the actual criminal can be shown to have engaged with their content before committing the crime. In fact, they don't even need to engage with it – so long as the content *could* theoretically motivate a "person predisposed to engaging in a white supremacy inspired hate crime" to, well, you know. It's completely subjective, based on what a "reasonable person" would do when no "reasonable person" would be caught dead in the same room as this bill. This means if someone reads the nursery rhyme "Baa baa black sheep" – declared 'problematic' nearly a decade ago for its [racial overtones](#) – then picks up an AR-15 and shoots a black family at church, the nursery rhyme writers could be

charged with conspiracy to commit a white supremacy-motivated hate crime. Jackson Lee herself [cited](#) the example of “someone making a post online that catches the attention of someone who then drives to North Texas and kills 20 Mexican Americans” to make clear precisely how unhinged she is.

It’s doubtful that such a case would make it to court, or lead to a conviction if it did, but public opinion – a product of think tank fellows rather than crowds – can turn on a dime. What sorority girl getting sloshed on margaritas in an oversized Cinco de Mayo sombrero in 2012 would have thought she’d be sentenced to remedial readings of “White Fragility” in 2022? The aim is not to create more work for the official censors but to spook the target into silence with fear of what *could* happen. Leaving the definition of “white supremacy” open-ended allows an ever-larger spectrum of opinion to be cordoned off as toxic, banned from university campuses and social media, and finally memory-holed as unthinkable. At the same time, actual racists like Ukraine’s neo-Nazi Azov Battalion are invited with open arms to travel the US speaking on [university campuses](#), swastika tattoos and all. While the Anti-Defamation League is quick to tar and feather anyone who points out Israeli war crimes, the censorship-loving Jewish organization has issued what amounts to an [official indulgence](#) for Ukraine’s biggest Third Reich fanboys.



Given the FBI’s penchant for crafting terrorism plots out of whole cloth, it would be a simple matter to take out all online wrongthinkers in one fell swoop under the white supremacy conspiracy law – just set up the usual militia honeypot for disaffected white boys, hand them the gear and point them at the minority in question, and make sure a manifesto is found nearby conspicuously listing the websites of every influential dissident in America. While last year’s *Missouri v. Biden* [lawsuit proved](#) – and the Twitter Files confirmed – that social media platforms were being used by a dozen or more government agencies to circumvent First Amendment prohibitions on state censorship, this new arrangement would eliminate even the need for that end-run, requiring only the fig leaf of Unacceptable White Supremacist Beliefs™ to justify the most egregious constitutional abuses.

“Replacement theory” – the idea that white Americans and/or Europeans are being deliberately supplanted in “their” nations by swarthy foreign hordes to suit nefarious ruling class purposes – first entered the mainstream discourse when Tarrant, who titled his manifesto “The Great Replacement,” supposedly set out to kill as many Muslims as possible because they were out-breeding Europeans. Tarrant’s manifesto would have gotten quite a



few people in trouble as white-supremacy conspirators, many of them dead – it includes poems from Dylan Thomas and Rudyard Kipling, memes, Wikipedia articles, and an infamous passage explicitly citing black conservative commentator Candace Owens as his ideological inspiration. Tarrant and copycats like Payton Gendron (the Buffalo supermarket shooter and friend of the FBI whose manifesto borrowed liberally from Tarrant and others) have helped transform the epithet “conspiracy theory” from CIA-sponsored smear to precursor of violent extremism, though they couldn’t have done it without UNESCO, the World Jewish Congress, and the Council of Europe, who recently joined forces to remind humanity that “[conspiracy theories](#) cause real harm to people, to their health, and also to their physical safety.”

Europe has taken the legal lead in equating conspiracy theory to terrorism, banning author David Icke from the entire Schengen Area last year because his scheduled speech at a peace rally in the Netherlands posed a potential “threat to [public order](#).” Rather than stand up to the police state, the media eagerly flew to its side, quoting “experts” who sagely opined that the “danger” posed by Icke’s “conspiracy ideology” was both clear and present and could inflict “lasting harm” upon the country.

This is in keeping with the refrain the WHO has kept up all alongside Covid-19 – that a deadly “infodemic” is spreading through sharing unapproved information about the virus, and that good citizens refrain from posting conspiracy theories online because words are equivalent to violence. This is a central part of children’s “media literacy” classes, aimed at building the perfect content filter directly into the child – because Big Brother can’t be everywhere. The idea is to graduate a generation for whom privacy is alien, dissent is criminal, obedience is a competitive sport, and turning in your parents for wrongthink is second-nature, all justified by the vague nonspecific crisis that has been looming in the background since they were born.

The censorship of New Dawn, the university witch-hunts against Dr. Coles and both Millers, the absurd white supremacy conspiracy bill, are all symptoms of the same totalitarian virus gradually sucking the will to resist out of humanity. Just as viruses need host cells to multiply, so does this one require an army of facilitators – “fake news” bounty hunters, “disinformation experts,” and the like – to smooth out humanity’s rough edges into blissful obedience. A pandemic – even an artificially-inflated synthetic one like Covid-19 – has to end, but an infodemic is forever, and this one has proven 100% fatal to human rights.

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