

“We are restricting freedom ... for the common good”: Irish Green Party Calls for Limiting Free Speech

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Global Research, June 21, 2023

[Jonathan Turley](#) 18 June 2023

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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The Irish Green Party followed many on the left around the world, including our own Democratic Party, this week and came out for censorship and speech controls. Indeed, the party went full Orwellian as its chairwoman Pauline O'Reilly called for "restricting freedom" to protect it.

O'Reilly's comments are part of the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022. We previously discussed this massive assault on free speech.

The legislation that would criminalize "incitement to violence or hatred against" people with "protected characteristics," as well as "condoning, denying or grossly trivialising genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes against peace."

Limiting free speech has become an article of faith for many on the left. I have written about my distress (as someone who grew up in a liberal, politically active Democratic family in Chicago) in watching the abandonment of free speech values by the party. Democratic leaders now uniformly call for censorship and speech regulations. President Biden even charged that companies who refused to censor opposing views on social media were "[killing people](#)." Others have denounced free speech as "[a white man's obsession](#)."

The anti-free speech movement has become openly Orwellian in claiming to protect freedom by limiting freedom. It also employs using terms like disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation to obscure their effort to silence those with opposing views. Rather than use "censorship," they refer to "content moderation."

That effort was on full display this week in Ireland with this anti-free speech legislation.

Speaking before the Irish Senate (Seanad) this week, O'Reilly [declared](#) “when one thinks about it, all law and all legislation is about the restriction of freedom. This is exactly what we are doing here. We are restricting freedom but we are doing it for the common good.”

It is the same message of New York democrats calling for [limiting speech as a way of protecting democracy](#). Indeed, former Clinton Labor Secretary Robert Reich has declared [free speech is “tyranny.”](#)

O'Reilly assured citizens that giving up freedom was nothing new or threatening: “Throughout our Constitution one can see that while one has rights they are restricted for the common good. Everything needs to be balanced.”

What is particularly chilling is how low the threshold is for denying free speech, according to O'Reilly. It now appears that “deep discomfort” is enough:

“If a person’s views on other people’s identities make their lives unsafe and insecure, and cause them such deep discomfort that they cannot live in peace, our job as legislators is to restrict those freedoms for the common good.”

What is interesting is that O'Reilly admits that there is nothing new about hateful views but it is time to clear out such voices: “Social media has fuelled hatred but it has also put on display for all of us the dirty, filthy, underbelly of hatred in Irish society. That hatred has always existed.” Of course, she and the majority will determine what views create “deep discomfort.”

The Irish legislation is likely to be replicated around the world if the free speech community cannot hold the line against the anti-free speech movement. It is part of an unrelenting movement in Europe, particularly by the European Union, to rollback Western free speech values that once defined countries.

We have been discussing efforts by figures like Hillary Clinton to [enlist European countries](#) to force Twitter to restore censorship rules. Unable to rely on corporate censorship or [convince users to embrace censorship](#), Clinton and others are [resorting to good old-fashioned state censorship](#), even asking other countries to censor the speech of American citizens.

Ireland now stands on the precipice of freedom. The embrace of such laws by the Irish is crushingly ironic. Frank Ryan, who fought against the treaty, spoke for many radicals in declaring “as long as we have fists and boots, there will be no free speech for traitors.” Those anti-Treaty forces rejected the views of free speech that long defined Western nations. Now, Ireland is declaring “no free speech for haters” and assumes the authority to define who are haters and who are not.

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