

Freedom of Speech

There's really not much point having freedom of speech in a self-censoring society like ours. I often think my Dad's effort against the WW2 enemies was wasted since we were subjugated anyway—by our own fears and shabby characters. Why we haven't allowed the corporates to torch all our libraries and murder our few remaining philosophers is beyond me. To their discredit, too many authors bow to this censorship just to get published. That's the real vanity press, not self-publishers. I had a look in my local bookshop and made a note of the sheer dominance of anaesthetic content of the books on sale. By 'anaesthetic' I mean distraction material; material construed so something else is missed, in the way that the pain of a toothache is taken away by paracetamol, a chemical. The pain is the signal that there's a malfunction that needs attention. What's being missed with this Hollywood studio approach to books is the stuff that civilizes us; that prevents us from becoming a race of remote controlled automatons. I don't like what happened to publishing before technology came to the rescue. One-eyed corporate profit demands rode roughshod over the interests of people like you and me who seek to get a bit of meaning out of life through our reading. In the next article, I'll explain how others see this quiet destruction of our liberties.

I was flat broke and in debt when I turned a publisher down on my first novel. That first experience can be exhilarating or bloody terrible. Mine was disgraceful. They wanted to render my story benign and inoffensive as a condition of signing the publishing contract. Why they even wanted it was a mystery to me. Why buy a new car then tart it down by smashing it about with a sledgehammer? Because they know their audience wants benign crap? I walked out of their office with my manuscript, an empty wallet and an intact self-respect. They thought I was a pompous git. And these people are in command?! If there are valid reasons not to publish a manuscript, very few of them are wholesome or hold water. The self-censoring mentality of business suits—non-creative types in commerce—has retarded human development and kept society chaste but stupid; innocent and gullible; fearful and dependent. It's not an achievement I want to participate in, let alone emulate or condone.

Censorship aims to cultivate a certain way of non-thinking in the readership and to avoid offending the established power centres (the money) where the strings and levers of society are pulled. We saw it in the old Soviet Union and now we see it flourishing in the West, with their rabid determination to knock off Wikileaks for exposing their shabby methods. Rupert Murdoch himself strangely admitted that Julian Assange was doing what the rest of the media should have been doing—keeping our servants honest. In both cases, East and West, it's because 'reforms' were introduced that allowed

the yobbo class to slip into management positions they were hitherto excluded from because of unfitness. They were always there of course but we can see them now in their ugly nakedness. And all because 'they get things done.' Whatever it takes. They use their influence to change laws that protect the public from their selfish activities. They've become the very areas that need to be offended by recognition of the destruction they cause to civil society. I see them as the avant-garde leading us back to barbarism. And we can't seem to get enough of it.

There's an undeniable level of hypocrisy in our society that says free speech is vital to democracy then does all it can to kill it. Most of us don't even see it happening, and offer no resistance. That explains why nobody has challenged the criminals of mega-crimes like this one. It's not likely to happen either under the system of censorship we have and refuse point blank to tinker with or change.' I can't see us here at Phoenix threatening national security, but I'm sure we're going to offend someone, as I did with 'Thunderbolt'. Thomas Jefferson said that such commentary is the lifeblood of democracy and individual freedom, and such blood needs constant renewal.

I can understand people wanting to stay out of court. Anyone can. But if the threat of action is sufficient to muzzle our freedom of speech, we've made a pact with the Devil that will eventually make a prison term seem pleasurable by comparison. I know of two cases where conventional publishers were far less interested in the truth than what the authorities would think if it got out. I

was asked to tone my stuff down to the point of neutering it altogether. I refused, and chose not to be published at all. One of the biggest publishers in Australia refused to take on my Thunderbolt book because it accused ancient colonial authorities of extra-judicial murder—a fact I was prepared to prove if given access to police records. Access was denied, even after I got parliament to vote an order to allow it. The Lieutenant Governor (aka the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW)—both unelected positions steeped in colonial pomp—stepped in to kill it. Parliament didn't know what to do about the Constitutional crisis that his actions unleashed.

The crisis endures, unattended. In a decent society, it wouldn't be left to individual authors to take this responsibility upon themselves single-handedly while opposed by the authorities. But authors like Evan Whitton and John Pilger are one of the rare groups prepared to do things for reasons other than the money or a comfortable life. Every gutless person I came across in that disgusting saga was in there for the money or a perverted form of patriotism (to the Crown) against the interests of the people the Crown is there to serve. This, folks, is modern fascist Australia. That's why Phoenix has to be run on a different basis to the sham organizations we call our publishing houses. They make me ashamed to be an Australian. One of our biggest and most 'respectable' proved itself to me to be a bunch of Quisling turkeys. A pox on them all, I say. This revolution isn't coming quick enough for me.'