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Written by **Luis Miguel** on May 26, 2023

Reliance on Web 2.0 Made Conservatives Targets for Censorship

Never take the danegeld.

In Medieval England, "danegeld" referred to a tax raised to pay off Danish invaders so they wouldn't ransack towns. While paying the danegeld preserved the peace, it also put the communities that paid it in a form of enslavement to the raiders.

Rudyard Kipling famously authored a poem titled "Dane-Geld" with universal application for anyone faced with the decision of putting themselves at the mercy of an enemy power for the sake of peace and convenience:

Luis Miguel

It is always a temptation to an armed and agile nation

  To call upon a neighbour and to say: —

"We invaded you last night — we are quite prepared to fight,

  Unless you pay us cash to go away."

… It is always a temptation for a rich and lazy nation,

  To puff and look important and to say: —

"Though we know we should defeat you, we have not the time to meet you.

  We will therefore pay you cash to go away."

… It is wrong to put temptation in the path of any nation,

  For fear they should succumb and go astray;

So when you are requested to pay up or be molested,

  You will find it better policy to say: —

"We never pay any-one Dane-geld,

  No matter how trifling the cost;

For the end of that game is oppression and shame,

  And the nation that pays it is lost!"

In our modern informational-technological world, the enemies of freedom have developed various forms of danegeld with which they exercise control over the masses. One of these is the way in which they have promoted nearly everyone to become dependent on Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 is the current iteration of the internet in which we find ourselves. It is one noted for the major role of user-generated content, facilitated by social-media platforms. As a result, Web 2.0 is dominated

by the firms that make these platforms, namely the Big Tech cartel centered in Silicon Valley.

Web 2.0 is differentiated from Web 1.0, the early version of the internet as seen in the 90s and early 2000s. In Web 1.0, technological restraints made it difficult for those without the money or tech skills to create content, so there were fewer content creators; most people were consumers.

The rise of Web 2.0 presented a tempting offer to the world. It appeared to be "democratic" in the sense that now nearly anyone can participate in the creation of content and sharing information — just open a YouTube channel, an Instagram page, or a Twitter account and you can build a following to immediately publish your writing, audio, photographs, or videos. You don't need an expensive website or have to be a big-name celebrity. In fact, many individuals have become celebrities out of obscurity thanks to social media.

Many believed that Web 2.0 offered freedom from the big-money institutions that had traditionally controlled the flow of information.

Thanks to social media, a journalist can get his work out to the masses without the backing of a major newspaper or television station; a podcaster can reach the people with his ideas without having to be hired by a radio station; a filmmaker can put his content directly on YouTube without the need for the distribution networks offered by a motion-picture studio; a musician can monetize his recordings on platforms such as iTunes, Bandcamp, or SoundCloud without having to sign with a record label.

But while these developments have had many benefits, it was far from the digital utopia many were inclined to believe. In particular, many ultimately realized that, far from being decentralizing and freeing, Web 2.0 came with its own set of restraints, for all of these liberating technologies are only made possible by big corporations who have their own agendas, just as the old information firms such as newspapers and publishing companies do.

And the new boss has proven himself to be the same as the old boss.

Many conservatives had to learn this lesson the hard way when companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram began cracking down on conservative speech in recent years, with the censorship particularly accelerating in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the presidency.

This author has been in the business of writing for online conservative publications since 2016. When social-media companies began to restrict the reach and content of right-leaning outlets, it took an enormous toll on the bottom line of many conservative businesses.

This was especially true on Facebook. Initially, that platform's easy-to-use advertising tools were a powerful way for alternative outlets to reliably build a following. But Facebook censorship decimated the readership of many of the outlets that I worked for or knew people at, leading to layoffs and even company closures.

The lesson to be learned is this: These platforms might be convenient and the features they offer for engaging with audiences might be enticing. I now see many right-wing writers creating Substacks and others excited at the announcement that Twitter, under Elon Musk, will be introducing monetization avenues for content creators.

But at the end of the day, becoming dependent on these things is simply paying the danegeld. The Right must continue to build its own platforms and not become dependent on the institutions created by those who hate us.

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