THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT

Social Media Monopolies Advance Leftist Agenda

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Despite his headline-grabbing indictment of Russian nationals for interfering with the U.S. election, special counsel Robert Mueller has still found no evidence of collusion between any Russians and the Trump campaign. Mueller indicted 13 Russians who apparently operated a “troll farm” in St. Petersburg, Russia’s second-largest city, purchasing ads on Facebook and sending provocative messages to Americans through Twitter and other forms of social media.

According to the indictment, the Russian effort to sow turmoil, confusion and division started in 2014, well before Trump announced he was running for president. Even after the 2016 election was over, the Russian trolls promoted a “not my president” rally featuring Michael Moore in New York City on November 12.

The 13 Russians will never be extradited to face trial in the United States; the indictments are apparently merely a political ploy by Mueller. The bigger question is whether our social media services such as Facebook, Google and Twitter will respond to the indictments by ramping up their own censoring of political speech on their platforms.

Already Facebook has announced it will hire 10,000 employees tasked with policing “hate speech” on its pages. But the toxic label “hate speech” is likely to be used as a pretext to impose a politically correct ideology on millions of unsuspecting users.

No one denies that Facebook, Google and Twitter are among the most liberal corporations in America. Virtually all their executives and most of their senior staff were avid supporters of Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders, and detested Donald Trump.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg chairs a pro-amnesty lobbying group called Fwd.us whose primary mission is to oppose Donald Trump’s efforts to secure the border. Facebook’s number two executive, Sheryl Sandberg, was spotted in John Podesta’s leaked emails writing that “I still want HRC to win badly. I am still here to help as I can.”

The only prominent figure in tech who is known to have supported Trump for president is Peter Thiel, an early investor in Facebook and a member of its board of directors. After beating back an effort to remove him from Facebook’s board for the heresy of supporting Trump, Peter Thiel announced he is moving both his

home and his investment company to Los Angeles because he can no longer tolerate the suffocating politics of the Bay Area.

Google fired one of its highly paid engineers, James Damore, merely for raising questions about his company's "diversity and inclusion" programs and policies. In a thoughtful essay he shared with fellow Googlers last year, Damore slammed the Silicon Valley "monoculture" with its "ideological echo chamber" where contrary viewpoints are shamed into silence.

Other tech workers have told the Wall Street Journal that the echo chamber extends beyond Google to the entire industry whose "groupthink and homogeneity" make it a worse place to live and work. Among tech workers polled in a survey quoted in the Journal, 59 percent of conservative respondents said they know someone who left the industry because they felt conservative views were unwelcome.

Two of the devious ways a social media platform can penalize conservatives are demonetizing and shadow banning. Demonetizing a site means that it is prevented from carrying the advertising it needs to defray its costs, while shadow banning means that the service provider is throttling back access to recent posts or systematically hiding them from viewers.

Cartoonist Scott Adams, a Trump supporter who draws the Dilbert comic strip, wrote last year that "hundreds of my Twitter followers have reported that I am being shadow banned on Twitter." Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey denied it, but Scott Adams insisted that "anecdotally, the evidence is overwhelming" and that "a number of other high-profile Twitter users report the same problem."

The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Ajit Pai, pointed out last year that Twitter "appears to have a double standard when it comes to suspending or deverifying conservative users' accounts as opposed to those of liberal users." He cited the case of U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn whose campaign announcement was blocked because it featured a pro-life message.

The highest-profile Twitter user, of course, is Donald Trump, whose account was blocked (supposedly by accident) and threatened with deactivation for his politically incorrect tweets. The company finally said it would allow Trump to continue using Twitter, not because Twitter believes in free speech but merely because Trump is a world leader whose statements are inherently newsworthy.

Facebook and Google dominate their industries just as Standard Oil and AT&T once did, which were broken up under the antitrust laws. Why are Facebook and Google being given preferential treatment while they monopolize the market?

More than half of all advertising spending is now collected by Facebook and Google, which exceeds that of newspapers, television channels and other media combined. Competition and accountability are badly needed for these social media monopolies.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, The Conservative Case for Trump*, was published posthumously in 2016.*