

Can Big Tech remain as the arbiter of politics?

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Increasingly, climate change is coming to dominate energy supply and indeed the whole economy.

Modest changes to the climate are taking place as a result of human activity releasing CO₂ – mainly by burning oil, coal and gas – but this isn't bringing adverse outcomes like fires, floods, hurricanes, pestilences, etc.

Combatting emissions by seeking to replace hydrocarbons with wind, solar and hydrogen is, however, having very serious economic consequences in costs to consumers and taxpayers while bringing about deindustrialisation of western economies, like Australia, which are implementing policies to restrain CO₂ and other emissions. Nor can such policies succeed since China, India and others are not complying with them.

My monthly newsletter, *Climate News*, deals with the politics, economics and scientific developments around the world. Together with a brief commentary, graphs and charts it contains links to recent longer pieces. Over the past eight years there have been roughly 90 different climate news editions which are available on the site, *Regulation Economics*.

The hosting site, Wix, suddenly blocked the February newsletter as well as all previous newsletters.

We were told that the February newsletter was not compliant because it contains a link to an article by the Heartland Institute about Anthony Watts (of Watts up With That) and distinguished former NASA scientist Roy Spencer being demonetised by Google.

Wix said the account could only be reinstated if we removed the link, but that any further use of the link would result in a permanent ban.

One support officer said the problem is that Heartland is a spam site; another attributed the ban to our using the term 'demonetise'. Upon further review, Wix rescinded its objection to the use of the link to Heartland and have restored business as usual.

The material in the link is accurate – indeed Google, which controls 90 per cent of global internet advertising, proudly virtue signals its censorious policy against people who deviate from their view of the orthodox position on climate change.

What is clear is that a comment about Google seeking to prevent diverse views on climate change triggered Wix's actions, doubtless at Google's behest. Google, YouTube, Amazon,

Facebook, and Twitter are all controlled by people who wish to prevent certain issues, especially on climate policy, being debated by those whose views they oppose.

This presents a danger for democracy and freedom of speech because these tech giants now control access to the global messaging platforms and are prepared to use their powers to silence voices presenting views that are contrary to their own opinions.

Less than ten years ago, in an episode of *VEEP*, the wayward sister of the Vice President's Chief of Staff yelled, 'You work for the Vice President, it's not like it's Google!' Intended to parody a tech firm's importance over that of the second most senior politician, the exclamation has proven oddly prophetic.

That said, if an American government that feels it is getting a raw deal from Big Tech is elected, it will move on the political power these firms have amassed and curb their monopoly powers. Divestments and regulatory constraints are on the horizon.

And not before time.