

News of the World, Kai Nagata & the Omnibus Crime Bill

by Sallie Caufield - Tuesday, August 16, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/08/news-of-the-world-kai-nagata-the-omnibus-crime-bill/>

No, this isn't a game of "One of These Things Is Not Like the Others", 'though I'm sure to suffer from the catchy tune playing in a loop in my head for the next several hours. Trust me, it's more like a game of Tri Bond.

If you have been off planet, embedded in an Amish community or otherwise incommunicado over the past several days [weeks, ed.], UK's 168 year old News of the World is kaput, thanks to a phone hacking scandal of breathtaking proportions – thousands of people, from Royalty to families of soldiers killed in action to a young murder victim, were targeted – and the taint has spread to The Sun.

Fortunately, Rupert Murdoch's huge, international media empire – News Corporation – is being examined with a jaundiced eye by people everywhere, not merely those who felt that his papers were little more than sensationalist gossip and self-serving controversy. The callous disregard of personal privacy rights in pursuit of exclusive stories to boost profits may be a systemic practice affecting other publications within the empire; we'll just have to wait to find out how deep this river flows.

(An aside: I can't help thinking of one of the main arguments in favour of privatisation of public services: That breaking a government monopoly allows for competition which drives costs down. Take a moment to scan the list of News Corp's holdings [here](#), bearing in mind that it is the SECOND largest media conglomerate in terms of revenue – Disney is the largest – and the third largest in entertainment. It is like this in every industry you can think of – a small number of really, really big fish who have eaten all the little fish. Not a lot of competition left any longer, is there? So what remains to keep costs down? Corporate benevolence?)

I could veer off to mention Murdoch's influence in American politics and huge donations to Republican interests, but I want to stay on topic here. Some other time, perhaps.

Meanwhile, Kai Nagata had an epiphany, which he was kind enough to share with us [here](#). Among other things, he's mad as hell about the careful filtering, manufacturing and marketing of news and he's not gonna take it any more.

It's increasingly apparent that if you are seeking pure, unadulterated news, the Internet is your best bet. Cyberspace is, essentially, an anarchy and you are free to explore at will, validating your personal opinions or expanding your horizon in a relatively unregulated frontier. Sure, you have to be a little savvy to spot the truthiness cuckoos that nest with legitimate journalistic offspring, but the WWW will yield news items other media find unworthy, uninteresting or simply too difficult to sell or explain. It's as close to self-regulating as any human endeavour can be. The Internet treats us like reasonable adults capable of discerning right from wrong. It's rather naive and endearing that way.

So far.

The Harper Government's Omnibus Crime Bill has raised red flags in some communities regarding the inclusion of the lawful access initiative bills, which give new surveillance powers to law enforcement and impose disclosure requirements on ISPs which must design their networks to facilitate surveillance. Red flags rose a little higher over Clause 5, which deals with hate crimes.

To a layperson like me, the idea that my personal contact information could be handed over to police or that data could be captured and preserved to investigate charges against me without the judicial scrutiny of a warrant is a little unnerving. Granted, a quick Google of my name will provide most of that info readily. However, there have been occasions I have posted anonymously in order to freely state opinions or observations which could potentially land me in hot water if I did so using my given name. (Nothing treasonous or illegal, I assure you, for what it's worth.)

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows that "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: . . . freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including the freedom of the press and other media of communication" which is limited only if it is reasonable to do so in a free and democratic society.

So, let me don my magnificent paranoia hat for a moment. Say I blog anonymously about racism and, to illustrate a point, I include a link to an Aryan Brotherhood website. (If there is such a thing; I don't want to increase their hits by Googling to find out for sure.) Someone reads the blog, clicks on the link, deems it hateful and informs law enforcement, which contacts my ISP, secures my contact info, then arrests and charges me with inciting hatred for posting the hyperlink. Granted, the courts may not convict me, ultimately deciding that what I did was entirely within my rights, but how much time has passed between my arrest and the rendering of the decision? Do I still have a job? Did I lose my house? My friends? Did my family disown me in a fit of horrified dismay?

Most netizens regulate themselves to a degree – no one wants to be branded an ill-informed nutbar to be flamed from here to eternity (well, almost no one) – but what if your opinion could get you arrested faster than you can say "Hi, I'm here in Colombia to support the Trade Unionists"? (If you don't get that, read [this](#). Then come back. I'll wait.)

The News of the World scandal shone a light on the unfettered hubris of profit-driven journalism, Kai Nagata's "Why I Quit My Job" mourned (among other things) the dumbing down and marketing of palatable news bytes for the unwashed masses and the Omnibus Crime Bill threatens to silence the voices in the wilderness that, in speaking their truth, may be considered hateful, or simply worth monitoring. Closely.

The truth may, in fact, be out there, but it may become much more difficult to find in the not-too-distant future. Harper promised the passing of the Bill within 100 days of June 2. The clock is ticking.

Reposted

from <http://cupedoll.blogspot.com/2011/07/news-of-world-kai-nagata-omnibus-crime.html>

from Thursday, 14 July 2011.