

The Passy Press[®]

Letters to the Editor

From: Peter Moore <peter.moore@undisclosed.com>
To: Nick Gardiner <enpg@thepassypress.com>
Sent: 19 October 2017 at 17:17:57 CEST
Subject: Peter Barnet Essay, October 2017

Dear Sir,

Barnet has put his finger on a phenomenon of prime importance. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, "Everyone is entitled, to his own opinions, but he not entitled to his own facts." The problem today is being sure that the stuff being pedaled as facts is, in fact, factual. In the old days, when newspapers and broadcasters were the primary purveyors of news, publishers were accountable for their outlets said, and, on the whole, for fear of legal repercussions, if nothing else, they did at least try to act responsibly. Now, of course, the internet and the computer make it possible for anyone and everyone to say whatever they want, and spread it all over the world. In addition, with a little work, they can produce fabricated photographs, movies, sound tracks, etc., to "prove" the veracity of their assertions, and, it goes without saying, conceal their identities. I think Barnet's proposal would help, and it may be a good place to start, but wonder if it would be enough.

I am as much worried, or more, by our increasing inability to identify the people making assertions about "facts", and/or expressing opinions. In my view, the first amendment should not protect anonymous speech. When entity like "The Committee for a Better America" runs an ad, we need to know who is putting up the money. I do not know what you would have to do to make that happen.

I am told by those who know more than I about these things than I that it would be possible to set up the internet so that the source of the stuff coming our way by that method did get identified. Apparently it would not be too hard to alter the way message addresses are encoded so that identity of site where every message originated was an indelible part of the address. To make this happen, there would have to be an international agreement about the way message addresses are constructed, but I can imagine that Putin might be as interested in that as any other head of government. It might be possible.

By the way, isn't "fake news" the same as what used to be called "propaganda" or am I missing something?

Sincerely,

Peter Moore

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