

On Twitter, Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others

“There continues to be meaningful public conversation about how we think about Tweets from world leaders on our service,” begins a post at the micro-blogging service’s non-micro-blog.

In summary, certain Super Very Important Special People (“world leaders”) are exempt from Twitter’s rules, but henceforth Regular Normal Completely Unimportant People (like you and me) are subject to new rules. We can’t like, reply, share or retweet rules-violating tweets from Super Very Important Special People.

“We understand the desire for our decisions to be ‘yes/no’ binaries,” the blog post continues, “but it’s not that simple Our goal is to enforce our rules judiciously and impartially.”

Well, yes, it is that simple. Impartiality in rules is the exact opposite of dividing Twitter users into two classes, one of them subject to the rules, one of them not.

In their great and unmatched wisdom, Twitter’s owners have over time moved to police speech on their platform in various ways.

They don’t HAVE to do that, at least in the US — Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act protects them from legal liability for user-created content under most circumstances.

There’s not even any particularly good reason to police user content, since the service’s “block” option allows users to ignore (by not seeing) content from other users whose opinions or language offend.

But hey, OK, fine — Twitter is a privately owned service, not a public square, and its owners are entitled to set any rules they care to set for its use.

On the other hand, it’s neither judicious nor impartial to make some rules, then announce exemptions from those rules for Super Very Important Special People while heaping new rules on Normal Completely Unimportant People to keep us from acting like Super Very Important Special People.

Not judicious. Not impartial. In fact, pretty [insert your preferred non-newspaper-safe expletive here] offensive.

The Super Very Important Special People already have their own bully pulpits from which to yell anything they like and be heard and obeyed. We Normal Completely Unimportant

People don't get to hold press conferences in front of news cameras on the White House lawn in Washington, or on the front stoop at 10 Downing Street in London, or on the steps of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

Twitter keeps making itself less useful to most of us in order to curry favor with a few. That's not just injudicious and partial, it's a bad business plan.