

Yes, Corporations Have Free Speech Rights Like Individuals

A short exchange with u/upchuk13 who believes the state should force private companies to respect free speech. I posted the displayed picture to the r/Anarcho_Capitalism subreddit with the following additional commentary, “The furthest thing away from a libertarian solution is demanding that the government force these tech companies to respect free speech when likely they’re the ones behind the restrictions and censorship. All we really have as believers in liberty is innovation.”

upchuk13: That’s not the furthest thing from a libertarian solution. I don’t see what’s wrong with government forcing these companies to respect free speech, on the face of it.

Skyler: Companies are people, and people (presumably) have the right to associate with whomever they please and to allow (or not) whatever speech they choose on their platforms (or within their property). Your asking for the state to violate freedom of association and free speech in order to protect free speech. This is a nonsensically absurd demand and totally contradictory.

upchuk13: The state is only violating rights if the entities in question (Google, etc.) have those rights to begin with, which is a separate discussion. Otherwise, it’s just a case of the Gambino family going after the Genovese family.

Skyler: Those “entities” are just people working together for a common cause. If people have those rights, then so do those “entities”. Do you believe that people have freedom of association and freedom of speech, or not?

upchuk13: I don’t think it’s debatable that individuals forfeit certain rights when they engage in certain coercive activities that violate the rights of others. Individuals have rights, but I don’t think that necessarily means organizations do.

Skyler: Censoring what speech is allowed on your property is not a rights violation. The rights violation occurs when the person being legitimately censored refuses the property owners rules and becomes a trespasser, who may be expelled with as much force as is necessary.

upchuk13: That depends on the moral status of the property. If my property is stolen or acquired through illegitimate means I have no right to censor those on it.

In the same way, if Google or Facebook are able to accumulate property through their use of intellectual property rights, their reliance on state provided infrastructure, extensive lobbying for favorable treatment, and their compliance with the NSA and other oppressive government policies in the USA and around the world, then their claim to being legitimate owners of their property diminishes.

Much like an absentee landlord in 17th century Latin America, their authority is derived from the use and threat of force, and their right to boss their tenant farmers around is questionable.

Skyler: That doesn't justify giving the state more power over these corporations. All it justifies is ending these corporatist policies so that these corporations must survive on their own merits, or go bankrupt.

You're falling for the same old trick of the state creating the problem through increased aggression and then tricking you into believing the problem can only be solved with increased aggression. Don't fall for it.

They never responded after that, over 7 months ago. Just as well as he had no legs to stand on anyway. More government aggression is not the solution to government aggression. *Duh!*