



Episode 1,219: Jeff Deist on Social Media De-Platforming and the Truth about P.C.

Guest: Jeff Deist

WOODS: All right, we've got a lot to talk about here. I did talk a bit about Alex Jones on my own in an episode and then with Michael Malice, but there's more to say here, and the story keeps developing. His website has been under attack. He was just suspended from Twitter, which was the one major holdout. He hasn't been banned from Twitter, but he got a seven-day suspension from Twitter. And I want to talk about the implications of all this.

But before we do that, I just want to say something about Alex Jones himself and then get a little feedback from you. Now, I'm saying this as somebody who, I've been on his show a couple of times. Once he had a guest host, but once was directly with him, and I even got him to laugh, and given his persona, it can be tricky sometimes, but I told a "baby with the bathwater" joke. You know, people say, okay, the Fed screwed up, but we don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. And I said, "You do when it's a demon baby." And that was just right up his alley.

Anyway, but he's also made a few kind references to me, and so I've never had any personal problem with him. And on some things, he is certainly right, but the trouble is he's clearly wildly speculative on really important questions time and again, when there's no need to be wildly speculative. There's plenty of damaging stuff about the state already out there, so you don't have to go into this wild speculation. And the result is this weird hodgepodge, where his followers, oftentimes when I meet them, some of them are good-hearted people, but they're ideologically all over the place. They don't know what they believe in, because it's just what's the crazy theory of the day instead of having a lodestar. Instead of having some kind of North Star to guide them. They haven't got that. They've got one guy's quirky personality instead of a consistent set of beliefs. Now, am I wrong about that?

DEIST: Isn't it amazing, though? We don't just have scolds and killjoys today; we have outright censors, would-be censors in the private sector. Imagine a bombastic guy like Alex Jones, if Mencken was around. Wouldn't he enjoy the spectacle? Look, I've got to admit I haven't followed Alex Jones in the last few years. Did he actually say — I don't know. Does he say things like the Sandy Hook shooting didn't happen and it was a bunch of crisis actors? I don't know, but assuming he has said that — I've heard people intimate that he has — that's a pretty bad thing to say. But do you want to live in a world where that's not okay, where we can't even —

WOODS: No, no, no, hold on a minute. I want to make clear: I'm not in any way saying that he should be de-platformed or anything like that —

DEIST: No, I know you aren't —

WOODS: Not in any way. But I do want to just say that this is the frustrating thing about him, that here's the guy with a huge — but on the other hand, here I am saying here's a guy with a huge platform, but he doesn't have this consistent set of ideas. Maybe he got the platform because he doesn't have a — because he's wild and out there and provocative. Maybe, I mean, look, he's got a much bigger audience than I do, so far be it for me to say he's not doing it right from a marketing standpoint. But I am saying that, as somebody who's a libertarian, it's just disappointing that somebody who is willing to see such wickedness within the powers that be can't just follow that. He has to go off on weird tangents all the time. I'm just saying it frustrates me.

DEIST: Sure, and if Americans have a sin, and they have many, it's not that we should be more credulous towards government; it's we should be less. And when you talk about his audience — I took the time this morning to look up his Alexa ranking. Not only does he have a much bigger audience than you, Tom, no offense; he's got a much bigger audience than *National Review* or all kinds of websites. His Alexa ranking is in the 3,000s, which puts them up there near a lot of big news sites. So don't kid yourself about this guy.

And look, he's done and said a lot a lot of good things over the years about getting out of wars and worrying about the deep state, things that turned out to be true. And when it comes to conspiracy theories, let's not forget that sometimes you fast-forward a few decades and what everyone was claiming was a conspiracy — let's say with respect to JFK — all of a sudden we're having congressional hearings, and it turns out that some of the was that the officially sanctioned story wasn't true at all. So there's plenty of reasons for Americans to distrust the official line not only coming from government, but also increasingly from the media overlords, who want to agree with government.

And here's the thing I would say about Alex Jones to people who want to ban him. Okay, take him off Facebook and Twitter if he's violated their terms of service. I'm okay with that. I don't like it. I think it's a bad thing. I think libertarians should object rather than cheer, which some of them have. But nonetheless, how far do we take this? In other words, if you say democracy is a good thing — and most people say that, even amongst libertarians. Some libertarians, of course, object to democracy as a way of organizing society. But let's say you say democracy in general is a good thing, the way Mises viewed it as a way to have an orderly transfer of political power without war. Okay.

So you're going to limit his ability to participate in political discourse. Voting is not the only way to engage in democracy. There are lots of ways to engage in democracy: political activism, speaking out, public discourse, etc. So when you take away his major platforms — and this is where people meet today, on social media. This is the town square of a sort. When you take that away from him, what you're basically doing is reducing his ability to participate as a citizen in democracy.

Okay, but how far would we take that? Would you take the vote away from people who believe in Alex Jones's conspiracies? Would you take the vote away from him? Would you say no, not only can you not be on Twitter or Facebook, you also can't vote, because you're clearly not intelligent or rational enough to participate meaningfully or intelligently in the democratic process. Hey, I'm all for that. I'm all for restricting democracy and voting. I'm not a milquetoast libertarian. I think democracy is lousy. So how far are we going to take that?

Are we going to have voting tests for people to see how current they are with what's going on with government and current events? Are we going to have news tests? Are we going to ask them to name the three branches of government, which I think about half of Americans can do? So this is a slippery slope.

If you want to take away Alex Jones' platforms, ostensibly private, then what you're really saying is not everyone ought to be able to participate 100% in democracy. Some people are too crazy or too misguided, and we ought to restrict their power. Okay, that's a pretty good argument in a certain sense, but that's also an argument against democracy. So which is it? You can't have it both ways, Tom.

WOODS: That is an excellent point. And these people, because democracy — well, their version of democracy — is like a religion to them, there's no way they could bring themselves to say that. There's no way they could bring themselves to say Alex Jones can't vote. Even though they don't want him to vote, I don't see how they could continue to perpetuate their worldview —

DEIST: Well, it is the most sacred of sacred cows, democracy. Of course, no one believes in it when the wrong guy wins or when Brexit wins. But here's the thing, is other sacred cows are falling. 30 years ago, everyone gave sacred-cow lip service to free speech, whether they actually believed in it or not. They gave lip service to it. That's falling by the wayside. People used to give lip service to all kinds of things. It's a new age, Tom, so I'm not sure that some people at this point won't start suggesting that Alex Jones people can't vote.

But it's funny to me to watch the same people, the same neoliberals of both parties who have done nothing but champion democracy as what's, you know, turn the 20th century into this Progressive Era, all of a sudden saying, well, they're interfering with our democracy. So \$400,000 worth of Facebook ads supposedly — not proven, supposedly — implemented by some Russian bots or hackers is enough to sway people's vote? If that's true, again, it's an argument against democracy and democratic voting as the means of organizing society. So personally I'm glad. Let's have a conversation about democracy and whether it works, but let's just not be hypocrites about it.

WOODS: I sent out an email to my list. Now, I think the podcast audience is getting tired of this, but look, until you sign up for my email newsletter, I'm going to keep badgering you, because it's really darn good. So you can get my eBook *Bernie Sanders Is Wrong* while signing up, so go to BernielsWrong.com and hop on that list.

Anyway, I sent out an email the other day about some collaboration going on between the American Enterprise Institute, which is neoconservative, and the Center for American Progress, which is a so-called progressive organization, and they've come together to say: look, the center has to hold here. We've got this wild lunatic in the White House, and he's saying things like NATO needs to be rethought or Brexit is a good thing. And when we have populists like this, they tend to undermine democratic institutions.

Now Brexit was decided democratically by the dictionary definition. And it's just as you say, when the outcome isn't what they want, then they say democracy is being strangled or destroyed. But no, it just means that people disagree with you. So they have to. once they've made their bed, it seems to me, by throwing in with democracy, they have to sleep in it, unless they're going to look ridiculous.

So there's that, there's the idea that Brexit is kind of weirdly undemocratic, or it would be undemocratic to scale back commitments to NATO or something. What does that even have to do with democracy? Until you realize that, for them, democracy means either ruled by the American elite or ruled by some approved elite somewhere. That's what it always means. Spreading democracy around the world always means being willing to comply with the demands of the U.S. elite. That's what it always means.

DEIST: And it also means political cover for them. If Hillary had won an overwhelming victory, neoconservatives and both parties would be saying, *See? This is the people's mandate.* So democracy is there to provide cover for the political class and to say, *We are your employees. You voted for us. We're just here as your servants and agents,* which of course, is a farce. But nonetheless, it makes them a little uncomfortable when the cover is blown, so to speak. And that's what's happened here, because, if people are really so feeble-minded, that just hearing some misapprehensions about what will happen after Brexit or hearing some misapprehensions about Trump versus Hillary is enough to sway their little mousy votes, then they shouldn't be voting. So you know, where are we here in democracy?

And as you say, though, it's going to be tough to turn the rhetoric 180, because social democracies, democratic voting was the linchpin of the statist narrative in the 20th century. That was what gave government its veneer of respectability and consent, and when you take that away, when you say, well, we have to limit it in certain ways — which, of course, the Constitution attempted to do. It attempted to ameliorate direct democracy — then you're getting into some interesting conversations. And it's been fun to see Hillary, for example, have a year- or two-year-long meltdown about democracy when, if she had just won, if she had gotten a few hundred thousand more votes in places like Florida, we'd be sitting here talking about how the American people are actually pretty wise and that they really couldn't be fooled by this huckster —

WOODS: And democracy worked the way it was supposed to.

DEIST: Yes. Yeah, oh my gosh, we'd be saying, "See? At the end of the day, the American people are quite sensible [laughing]."

WOODS: Right, right, yeah.

DEIST: And it's a few, 300,000 or 400,000 votes out of a country — in the electoral college, anyway — out of a country of 320 million is enough to send us into this absolute psychosis. I mean, what a farce.

WOODS: All right, so what we've observed happening is, of course, an attack on Alex Jones. But then other things have happened before and since — Gavin McInnes was yanked from Twitter, and if you saw, he did a funny video where he actually did a screenshot of the email that Twitter sent him, you know, "You have been suspended from Twitter," which "suspended," as he points out, doesn't mean what it meant when you went to school and suspended means you're out of school for three days. Their "suspended" means you're never coming back — and then they say, "because you violated our terms of service, specifically this" — and then it's blank, which is the — And then they go on to say, "Now, if you try to start another account, we're going to ban that too." But it's specifically — and it's blank. Which to me, yeah, okay, it could be a computer glitch, but I think it's Twitter demonstrating its raw power. Like we're going to be in your face, ostentatiously in your face about how we don't

even need to give you a reason. And in fact, we're going to just leave the reason area — we won't just excise that from the email. We're going to say, "Here's the place we could have given you a reason. We've chosen not to."

DEIST: Well, I have to give a little bit of a mea culpa here, because I'm one of those kind of libertarians, who five or ten years ago would have been saying, look, corporate power is irrelevant. The only relationship that you have to worry about that's involuntary is your relationship with the state, let's say the IRS. And these are private companies, these are private platforms. If you don't like it, go build your own platform.

And I still agree with that. I still don't want the government to censor the Internet. I don't want government to control Internet or, excuse me, social media platforms, even when many of those providers have nefarious relationships with government at all levels. They're providing cloud services to federal agencies. They're helping NSA and CIA snoop on us. They are acting sometimes de-platforming people at the behest of governments. If you recall, a few years ago, Zuckerberg had a conversation with Angela Merkel in Europe, where he assured her that he would take some people off Facebook who were pushing back about immigration in Germany. So let's not kid ourselves that these aren't deeply state-connected actors.

Nonetheless, that said, I still don't want to see government cracking down on them and forcing them to bring Alex Jones or Gavin McInnes back. But we have to realize the environment we're in. There is what I call a state linguistic complex. It's very scary. It's very authoritarian, and it is attempting to silence people. So this is part of a bigger, broader trend of the last 30 or 40 years. It's always been around, but you know, we can call it, for lack of a more precise term, PC, political correctness, which is nothing short of an attempt to create officially sanctioned thought.

I noticed Michael Malice said something about this the other night about, look, this will never go away. Progressives have been doing this since the French Revolution, was his example. And that's true, but it seems to me libertarians ought to push back. And this takes a lot of forms. There's not just de-platforming. There's shadow banning. There's people snitching on each other at work. There's doxing people's address, all that sort of thing, mobbing people in restaurants. And it has very real-world consequences. You can lose your job; you can lose your career, your friends, your reputation, your ability to make money. So it's not something that we should cheer, even when it's not direct state action.

And I recall very clearly, a dear, dear friend of mine, Kent Snyder, some of your listeners might know his name. He was Ron Paul's — he worked on the 1988 Ron Paul campaign, and he also was instrumental in getting Ron to run in 2008, which was something Ron really thought was a little bit of an outlandish idea the time. Kent unfortunately passed away not long after that.

But he told me and he also said this to Lew Rockwell, who was — Lew was a big Internet guy early in the late '90s, early 2000s, made sure that LRC and Mises.org were both early-on platforms available online. And Lew was a huge fan of Google and Gmail. He thought that this was just a wondrous company, and of course, in many ways it is. And I remember Kent saying, you know, this is going to take a bad turn Google has too much power. And both Lew and I were a little dismissive of that at the time. This probably would have been somewhere in the mid 2000s. But here we are today. I mean, these companies are actively engaged in trying to

narrow speech and thought and to silence people who are giving unallowed opinions. You know, we can't kid ourselves about this. So I admit that I underestimated in this sense corporate power, and that it's a problem and it's something we ought to push back against.

Personally, I don't want to see censorship by the state. Obviously, that's unconstitutional if you care about that sort of thing. But I also don't want to see antitrust applied to these companies. I would much rather see a tort theory applied. In other words, if Alex Jones has been harmed, sue them. There's already a tort called interference with contract and tortious interference with business arrangements. I think these kinds of theories could be explored.

And more importantly, if social media platforms are picking and choosing who gets to say what — and clearly, they are. And you know, okay, okay, left versus right. But there's clearly a left-wing bias here. They are silencing voices on the right. They're not silencing Sarah Jeong — then they are in effect taking on an editorial function. They're saying that certain speech — we're not just a platform like the telephone book; we're taking on a bit of an editorial function. I think once they do that and once that becomes provable, then they are moving into the area of potential defamation lawsuits. You know, they can't just say anymore, "Hey, we don't we don't participate. We just let people say whatever they want; therefore, we can't be held responsible for any kind of tort liability." But I think that might go by the wayside. There might be a court out there that wants to hear a lawsuit against a social media company who's actively engaged in silencing someone.

So you know, we live in interesting times. The answer is not heavy-handed government. The answer is of course building new platforms and that sort of thing. It's tough to do. Pretty tough to replace Facebook, but here we are, Tom. And you know what what's interesting to me is that we always feel like as libertarians we have to have the perfect solution, the airtight solution that will solve all problems. *Oh, just privatize X or just create new Y.* And of course, life isn't always that simple, and this is frankly a fair critique of libertarianism, which is that it's overly simplified — no, it's not overly simplified; it just says that human beings sometimes have to muddle through things, and the best way for them to do so is with private solutions where government's not involved, where there's actual skin in the game, where there's profit and loss signals for the actors. And that produces the best, though imperfect, result for all, and I think we're in sort of that stage with the Internet.

So I don't join those who want to say, "Well, look at you silly libertarians, look what social media platforms are doing to you. Ha ha ha, where's your market?" I'm not ready to join in that, but I'm also ready to say that this is an unholy melding of corporate and state power and that a we ought to fear it. And it's illiberal. It's illiberal, and it's a form of political correctness that we ought to oppose.

WOODS: Why don't we take just a minute to say something nice about a really nice development on the internet?

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Now Jeff, I know this is not the best example to cite, but it's still something. The other day I just want to know what arguments could the Sandy Hook people have, you know people, if they are making that argument, I just wanted to know, out of curiosity, what is the basis of the claim. Because it does seem like we have real-life parents talking about this, so I wanted to see how they would do it.

So I typed in "Sandy Hook hoax," and you know how Google tries to anticipate what you're going to type in as you're typing it? So I typed in "Sandy Hook," and there are 8 million possible things that could come up, but of course "hoax" is not even there, even though I am sure there must be hundreds of places that would say that. So I started typing an H, O, A – again, no recognition of this. I typed it, clicked it. Nothing. It's all just general stories about Sandy Hook, refutations of the Sandy Hook theories. I think it was page ten where I finally actually found somebody – I think it was Infowars, which was down at the time, making whatever the heck the case is. Now, I'll grant you, I say this is not the best example because I'm fairly certain that that's not a sound argument. But, wow. But that's just Orwellian, that, people, you're too stupid, so we've already sifted that out just to tell you how stupid that is.

It's particularly creepy, because when people were trying to lead us into the war in Iraq on equally preposterous grounds, if you ask me, I didn't see the search engines actively suppressing war propaganda in the service of peace. The war propaganda was the first thing to come up. And if anything, that people who were arguing against it might have been slightly buried, but I don't know, maybe Google wasn't in that business just yet. But you see my point. They're not going to do this to the powers that be when their lies have vastly greater real-world significance than whatever Alex Jones is saying on a particular day.

DEIST: Yeah, absolutely. And look, a lot of people might type "Tom Woods" into Google and find you right at the top of the results. It wouldn't take much for Google to simply disappear you to the tenth page of results or disappear you altogether. You probably have some organic traffic where people actually type directly into their browser, but that would undoubtedly harm you if Google made that decision. And there's no clear successor to Google. Some of the other search engines DuckDuckGo, etc. are not as technically adept, regardless of whether they're less than censorious in their approach. So these companies have the ability to harm you and disappear you.

And this was my point when I gave a talk a week or so ago at the Federalist Society, is that PC is real, and it's time for us to stop acting like it's not. I mean, is it just a coincidence, Tom, that 99% of people who work at big tech companies happen to agree with an officially sanctioned line about whatever's happening, you know, Trump versus Hillary? I mean, no, that's not just a coincidence. This is the result of a real attempt to channel thinking into certain avenues and to squelch speech. I mean, this this is a very real animal we're dealing with.

And after everything that's happened in the past couple of years, I don't ever want to hear anyone tell me, "Oh, Jeff, you know that" – because I gave a speech on PC a couple years ago in Dallas. I think it was 2015, actually. A long, long, long time ago. I don't ever want to hear anybody again say, "Oh, Jeff, you're just overreacting. There's no such thing as PC. It's just people using appropriate words or not being mean to others or not using certain slurs and this and that." No, that's not true. It's very real and it exists. It can be amorphous. But the thing about it is that we often apply it ourselves without even knowing, without even thinking about it, because we live in this "gotcha" world now.

So it's, it's very scary. The scariest form of censorship is self-censorship. And, you know, when you look on on your social media feed, and you see people attacking each other and doxing each other and trying to get people fired, that tends to have a sobering effect on people. It tends to make them keep their opinions to themselves. And I think that this is why there was such disbelief when Trump won, because I think millions and millions of Americans who are

kind of tired of the left and tired of PC — and they probably weren't all that thrilled by Trump. They might have preferred a Ted Cruz or whatever. But nonetheless, they were a little worried about where the left in this country, where progressives were going. And so the one thing you can do without anybody knowing, at least for the moment, is go vote anonymously.

So they did that, and it shocked the left. It's still causing them to have spasms. In other words, they have to have an explanation of why Hillary lost, and it can't just be that she was a lousy candidate or that people don't like the things that she has to say or that the left increasingly represent — that can't be the answer, because they've been operating under this doctrine of inevitability, that progressivism has an arc and it's part of a greater historical arc and it's arching upwards. And so Trump just couldn't happen. There's no way that that was legitimate. So they've created all these explanations to solve their own psychology, whether that's Russian interference or whatever it might be. And I think PC is part of this, that you're not allowed to think certain ways and if you do, you ought to be outside of the bounds of polite society.

Now, this is something this is something that libertarians shouldn't poop on [00:28:06] and that we should be aware of and that we should think is real, because, who's next? I mean that's always the question, isn't it? Who's next? And it could be *The Tom Woods Show*.

WOODS: Yeah, I tend to think that it's not that likely that I'll have this problem, but I do think it's — now, as of over the past month or so, I now think it's 10% more likely than I thought it was before. But I think they would have to peel a number of other layers of the onion first before they get to me, and I think I'm such small potatoes to them that I don't think it would really be worth their while. But just to say, on the other hand, sometimes small fries are peeled off, because they figured nobody's going to notice or care. So there's always that, too.

DEIST: Well, it's true and to an extent, they might like having libertarians around if we're not too much of a threat. This has always been argued in libertarian circles. If we ever got too big, or a Libertarian Party candidate ever got too many votes or something, then all sudden we'd find them cracking down on us much harder. So it remains to be seen.

But the bottom line is that there's nothing in being libertarian that requires us to mythologize what's going on around us. We can observe things with a clear eye. And one thing we need to do is get over this fetish, this atavistic fetish that libertarians have always had of saying, well, we're neither left nor right. Well, of course, that's true in the political sense, but there's all kinds of cultural and social things going on around us where the left is worse or the right is worse. So right here, right now, at this point in U.S. history and in the West, the left is worse on speech. They just are. And so in other words, this is why I think people like me and people like Tom Woods are often — *Oh, you guys are always criticizing the left, and you're right-wingers*. Well, we got to call them as we see them, and we just have to get over this weird obsession with saying we're neither right nor left. That's entirely true, but it's also oftentimes irrelevant.

And what it's done is it has allowed progressives to frame the debate, because we don't even see, we don't even understand the degree to which progressives owned the 20th century. They took over basically everything. The one thing that they haven't taken over is some voters and government in red states. That's how we got Trump. That's how we still have Republican governors and some kind of right-wing legislatures, but they really control virtually everything

in the United States. And that tends to have an effect, again, on narrowing what we say and do. And so if we're not even allowed to recognize that, recognize that progressives control fortune 500 companies, that progressives control the Catholic Church, they control all mainline Protestant denominations, they control virtually all synagogues, they control cultural arts, they control education, not just K through 12, but academia, media certainly. If we're not allowed to fess up to the reality around us, we just end up tilting at windmills.

And so if progressives took the size and scope of the state from 10 to 100, let's say, over the 20th century, and we come along and say, oh, I'd like to move it from 100 to 98, and we accept being labeled as right-wing reactionaries as result, that seems silly to me. Or what if we just say, well, it went from 10 to 100; I want it to go from 100 to 105 a little slower than progressives do, *Oh, you're a right-wing reactionary*. We have to have the guts, Tom, to not worry about what people think or the labels they apply. I don't care if somebody thinks I'm a right-winger. I'm anti-state. I don't think government should control society. To me, that is the essence of libertarianism.

So I'm not concerned if someone wants to say, oh, you're just against PC because you must be actually be a crypto closet right-winger. That's absurd, and it's silly, but more importantly, it diverts us. Libertarians have allowed themselves to be diverted away from the big picture items, which is the economic fallacies that plagued this country and that plagued the West and that are going to bring us into some very unpleasant circumstances soon if we're not careful. So, you know, we've got to keep our eye on the ball, and we've got to call a spade a spade. And right now, when it comes to speech, when it comes to political correctness, when it comes to discourse, the left is worse, and we have to recognize it.

WOODS: Just as we're talking, Jeff, I just saw this notification from Stefan Molyneux, who says, "Within" — and just to interject here, there are people who don't like him and there are people who don't like me because I talked to him or I've had him on. But those people can go jump in a lake, because I'm sick and tired of, *You're not allowed to talk to this one* — I will talk to anybody I darn well, please, okay? So shut your mouth.

Anyway, Molyneux says, "Within 24 hours, my YouTube channel has received two community guidelines strikes, likely as a result of a mass flagging campaign, and is now on the verge of total deletion." I don't know how many millions of views he's had, but it's astronomical how many millions of YouTube views he said." Please, respectfully contact @TeamYouTube" — this is Twitter and alert them to this injustice." And then he posts graphic of some further text about this, where he explains what's being targeted. And he says, "I've poured 12 years of my life into my YouTube channel with thousands of videos, hundreds of thousands of subscribers, and hundreds of millions of views." And he says, "As it stands, I'm unable to publish to YouTube for two weeks. Today, my channel hangs by a thread and could be destroyed at any moment. Whether it survives is not up to me since I've always strived to tell the truth." And then he's asking people to help them out.

Now, it seems to me that there has to be, somewhere on this earth, a group of entrepreneurs and a group of potential customers, all of whom believe that it is not the job of a social media platform to be your hectoring mother. That is not why it exists. And if people start complaining, *Oh, there's an offensive video*, I want a company that says, "Okay, cry baby, take your business elsewhere, because this is where the adults are talking." It seems to me there has to be people who are willing to say, yep, we're hosting it, whether we agree with it or not, because somewhere on this earth there has to be free discussion and we're it.

Somewhere there has to be somebody — somebody was joking maybe you could be NotYourMother.net or something. And I mean hosting companies, all down the line, where they say: if you're going to complain to us that we've got some nasty people who have a website on our service, it's not our job to monitor their behavior, their politeness and civility and the reliability of their information. We're just a web hosting company. What people want to do with their hosting, as long as it's not illegal, is fine with us, period. Go take your crybaby story somewhere else.

Am I living in a fantasy world to think that's conceivable?

DEIST: Well, certainly not technologically. It's very difficult to go out on your own, as we saw with Glenn Beck, for example. He left Fox and tried to go to a subscription model, and he had something like 3 million viewers per night, and he thought if he could just walk 300,000 of them over to a \$10-a-month platform, he'd be in business. He spent a ton of his own money building out apparently a very nice studio and all that sort of thing. It just didn't really work. And so it's all about the network effects. It's all about getting your voice out there where people are actually listening to it. I'm sure a lot of people would walk over to an alternate like Vimeo or something if Molyneux decided to do that. I don't follow him. I don't know anything about him, because I'd always heard that he's kind of into psychology or peaceful parenting or something that doesn't interest me. But I think he could walk some of his audience over.

But look, this is a cautionary tale that, the Mises Institute has a robust YouTube channel. We have a lot of videos on there, and every one of them, we have the original feed. We could recreate it. It would be a bear, and we'd be certainly put out if YouTube dropped us, but we have all the content. We have it in our own files, so we could recreate those videos on Mises.org without sending people out to YouTube. So you know, increasingly you've got to get some server space and you've got to put your content on something you control. If you're doing, let's say, a WordPress site, host it yourself. Don't put it up on WordPress. You know, you've got to take action and control it. And I can't imagine that someone as big as Molyneux in the video world doesn't have backups, but maybe I'm wrong.

WOODS: Well, he may, but the trouble is this — I can't tell you how many people have said they found me because they were on YouTube looking at something else, and then in the recommended videos, they saw one of mine. And now that and many other — there are many other disadvantages to being taken off YouTube, but that's a major one. You see an interesting-looking video recommended for you, you click on it, you watch it, you become a fan of that person. So it's true, he could bring the audience, but the ability to build organically and spontaneously on this big platform would be severely compromised. I mean, I don't need to tell you this.

So I'm going ahead and, like all civilized people, I'm retweeting this to see what we can do here. But I just feel like now's not the time to be — I know I started the episode by scolding Alex Jones a little bit, but that was just to make clear my frustration that the guy gets the wickedness of the state but he has to express it in ways that are so bizarre half the time that it's sort of unhelpful, at least from my standpoint.

But it seems to me now is not the time to be hectoring people who are on the verge of being disappeared, you know? *Oh, well, you said politically incorrect things.* You know what? If we don't stand up for those people, unambiguously, we are going to regret that later. I mean,

even if it weren't the right thing to do in and of itself, we're going to regret that later. And I mean, anybody who's going to start this kind of process, where this one's gone, then that one's gone, then that one's gone — you think they're going to spare you just because you were a quisling? You think they're going to spare you because you tattle-tailed on somebody? Then you don't know how these people work. Did you not see how the French Revolution developed [laughing]? The early people of the French Revolution who were all, *Oh, we're the responsible ones in the French Revolution, so we'll be fine*. Yeah, they're all dead but by the end of it [laughing].

DEIST: Well, we need Walter block here. Libertarians have always defended people on the fringes of society, whether that would be a sex worker, a prostitute, whether that would be a drug user. As long as they're engaged in consensual activity with no victim beyond themselves or their cohorts, libertarians have never shied away from defending the undefendable and even the unseemly. And if Alex Jones doesn't fall into that category, then I'm not sure what to say, because he's speaking words. He's not physically assaulting someone other than the guy from the Young Turks, which [laughing] — I think that was mutual combat, maybe.

But, you know, this is where we are, and if speech is a core part of liberty and if ideas are a core part of liberty, then we have to accept the good with the bad. And that means I'm perfectly happy to hear from communists and socialists all day long. And the price you pay for that is that an Alex Jones of the world might come along and say some things that make you uncomfortable. I certainly would rather live in a rough-and-tumble Wild West of absolute free speech than what is starting to come in the West.

And don't kid yourself. Hate speech laws are headed to the United States. They exist throughout Europe. They exist in Canada. This is where we're headed. So right now, Tom, nobody comes along and puts Alex Jones in jail. Nobody from the government comes along and puts Alex Jones in a prison cell and says, "The First Amendment no longer applies to hate speech. What you've said about the Sandy Hook incident is hateful. A jury of your peers found you guilty. Spend some time in the slammer, and, you know, let the Supreme Court wrestle with whether the underlying hate speech bill passes constitutional muster." God knows what they might say about that.

Okay, so the government's not doing that in the United States yet. The question we have to ask ourselves are: are we emboldening it in that direction? And number two, are we imprisoning people in a de facto sense? If someone loses their job and their life falls apart and they can't find employment because of, let's say, a reckless tweet, okay, the government hasn't put them in jail. But the life around them has shrunk down not to jail-cell size, but it's shrunk. They have fewer opportunities. Perhaps they make less money. They have fewer friends. Their life is in a smaller box than it used to be. So we've imprisoned them in a bit of a metaphorical sense.

So these are serious things, and if we're about human liberty flourishing — that's what we're about at the end of the day, is what is truthful? Because we always have to, first and foremost, worry about truth, because truthfulness comports with human nature, and our political ideology, our philosophy ought to comport with human nature. So number one is: what is true, regardless of anyone's feelings or thoughts or offense? And number two is: how do we apply that to human flourishing? How do we make society better, richer, healthier, wealthier, etc. Those are the kinds of macro questions libertarians ought to be asking.

And what we're doing to, in a sense, in a weird sense, the least among us, like an Alex Jones mirrors the way we ought to care about charity and the poor and that sort of thing. In terms of reputation, which is a form of wealth, Alex Jones is the least among us. So again, before you want to jump on the bandwagon bashing him, take a look in the mirror and say, "Am I next?"

WOODS: Incidentally, Noam Chomsky even came out and said —

DEIST: Yes.

WOODS: — that Alex Jones shouldn't be de-platformed, so that makes him better than some of our compatriots, let's put it that way, at least on this. If even Noam Chomsky is saying, look, people, for heaven's sake, this is stupid, then you've got to really look at yourself. All right, we'll leave it there, Jeff. I'm going to link to the talk you gave at the Federalist Society not too long ago over at TomWoods.com/1219, our show notes page for today. I'll link to a couple of episodes where I've talked about this and where I've talked about alternative social media platforms. I mean, for the time being, I'm staying put. I'm going to stay put on any place I can reach an audience, and I think you'd be silly not to do that. Anywhere you can get an audience, you should go, and even if something were ever to happen to me, I would not say to all my friends, in solidarity with me, you've got to get off that platform. That would be stupid. I want people to reach people. So as long as that can still be done, I'm going to be there, but I'll also look into alternatives, as well. So Jeff, thanks a lot. I hope we can talk again soon.

DEIST: All right, Tom.