

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATVOD: A Major Risk To Freedom of Speech on the Internet

The UK government has finally moved to directly regulate Youtube content and internet freedom of speech.

On the 2nd February 2014, the UK Column received a letter from ATVOD, the Authority for Television On Demand. ATVOD is a subsidiary of Ofcom, the UK government's communications regulator. The ATVOD letter gave notice to the UK Column that as the result of a Statutory Instrument amendment to the 2003 Communications Act, the UK Column was required to notify ATVOD that it was running "an on demand programme service", to pay a fee, and to submit to regulation.

ATVOD mainly chooses organisations to regulate based upon whether or not they are perceived to produce "television-like programmes". In several television conversations between the UK Column and ATVOD, an ATVOD representative admitted that there is no fixed standard for what constitutes "television-like" video content, and that their determinations are made on purely arbitrary opinion.

When asked by the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications Inquiry on Media Convergence and Its Public Policy Impact on the 5th February 2013 if "[ATVOD] had trouble defining [television-like services], Ruth Evans Chairman of ATVOD replied, "yes. It is an evolving art."

It is on the basis of the "evolving art" statement that ATVOD's claims of a "light regulatory burden" should be seen. At present ATVOD claims to exist in order to prevent harmful material becoming available to children and to prevent hate speech. It is clear, though, that anyone submitting to the current "light regulatory framework" joins a fluid and evolving regulatory framework with potentially draconian financial penalties. The penalties allowed for through the Communications Act 2003 amount to 5% of the regulated organisation's turnover or £250,000, whichever is the greater amount.

Following discussion with ATVOD, the UK Column made the decision that ATVOD's requirements would be detrimental to our freedom of speech and expression on the internet, and we would not submit to regulation by ATVOD.

ATVOD subsequently issued an "enforcement notice" giving the UK Column ten working days to comply with their demands. Having carefully considered our options, we decided to cease the activity which ATVOD describes as an "on demand television service", and removed all UK Column video on demand content from the internet.

UK Column co-editor Brian Gerrish says, "this represents an immediate and dangerous attack on free speech on the internet and should be of massive concern to all Youtube users, as the government seems to be moving to censor individuals directly, putting them on the same regulatory footing as global corporations like the BBC and CNN. As a government agency, ATVOD's clearly flawed working practices and their alignment to the corporate media pose a direct threat to our personal liberty and freedoms."

UK Column co-editor Mike Robinson says, "it used to be that to produce high quality 'studio based' video content, the financial barrier to entry was very high. Today, with 'television studios in a box' costing as little as a few hundred pounds, ATVOD seems to be attempting to extend its remit to even the "one man band" producer operating out of his bedroom. This is a dangerous road to tread."

For editors:

Further detail can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0zP0ATo15w>

The UKColumn is a self funded voluntary community news organisation receiving no commercial advertising or sponsorship. It particularly focuses on the exposure of fraud, corruption and crime within the UK's political and banking arena, and the interwoven stealing, trafficking and abuse of children facilitated by paedophiles at the highest level of the political and establishment society. UKColumn has been fearless in exposing the subversive activity of the political charity Common Purpose, the BBC and other major mainstream media, and has led publicity of several unique cases of child stealing and abuse by the British State. Working

alongside the British Constitution Group, the UK Column has also continued to track and expose the wider subversive Westminster attack on the British Constitution and Bill of Rights - two vital foundation stones of our freedoms and liberties. UK Column has also been at the forefront of the campaign to reinstate the Bradbury Pound as our debt free national currency.

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ATVOD is the independent co-regulator for the editorial content of UK video on demand services that fall within the new statutory definition of On Demand Programme Services.