

## Google's Liberal Chickens Coming Home to Roost

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Suddenly, the scales appear to be falling from liberals' eyes regarding Google.

For years, Google employed the anodyne motto "Don't Be Evil," even as it ruthlessly leveraged its political power to bend government policy in its favor.

Of course, there's nothing inherently improper about Google or any other organization exercising its First Amendment right to petition government on behalf of its interests. It's a bit unseemly, however, to pretend to act altruistically while cynically advancing a policy agenda that benefits Google at

the expense of everyone else.

For example, Google was a leading corporate proponent of Obama Administration efforts to upend decades of bipartisan internet policy and begin micromanaging internet service as a "public utility" under Depression-era laws under the false flag of "net neutrality." That 2015 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulation has already reduced private broadband investment. But that's of no concern to Google, which stood to gain lucrative free-rider benefits for itself and its YouTube video bandwidth glutton.

Google has also been a chief culprit in the ongoing effort to undermine U.S. intellectual property (IP) rights. America's system of protecting copyright, patent and trademark rights more reliably than any other nation on Earth helps explain why we became the most inventive, creative and prosperous nation in human

history.

But again, that's of little import when Google stood to benefit from weakening others' IP, such as scanning millions of books for viewing on its site without authors' consent.

That's just a small sampling of Google's relentless efforts to benefit itself at the expense of others.

But by heavily subsidizing liberal causes and political candidates, Google succeeded in maintaining favor among the left. At least temporarily.

Abruptly and perhaps inevitably, however, Google has found itself the target of leftist wrath.

Last week, the left-leaning New America Foundation terminated one of its scholars critical of Google, triggering a *New York Times* headline "Google Critic Ousted from Think Tank Funded by the Tech Giant."

It seems that Barry Lynn, head of a New America subgroup named Open Markets, had the audacity to applaud a \$2.7 billion European antitrust penalty against Google imposed in June. That triggered the ire of Google executive chairman Eric Schmidt, who apparently assumed that the \$21 million Google had given to New America over the years would purchase greater fealty.

As detailed by the *Times*, the repercussions were swift and severe:

*[W]ord of Mr. Schmidt's displeasure rippled through New America, which employs more than 200 people, including dozens of researchers, writers and scholars, most of whom work in sleek Washington offices where the main conference room is called the "Eric Schmidt Ideas Lab." The episode left some people concerned that Google intended to discontinue funding, while others worried whether the think tank could truly be independent if it had to*

*worry about offending its donors.*

*Those worries seemed to be substantiated a couple of days later, when [New America President Anne-Marie] Slaughter summoned the scholar who wrote the critical statement, Barry Lynn, to her office... Ms. Slaughter told Mr. Lynn that "the time has come for Open Markets and New America to part ways," according to an email from Ms. Slaughter to Mr. Lynn.*

All of this occurred one year after Mr. Lynn "organized a 2016 conference at which a range of influential figures—including Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts—warned of damaging effects from market consolidation in tech," as reported in the *Times* story. Ominously, that event triggered an email from Ms. Slaughter to Mr. Lynn reading, "just THINK about how you are imperiling funding for others."

New America and Google insist that Mr. Lynn's heterodoxy played no role in his termination, of course.

According to Mr. Lynn, "Google is very aggressive in throwing its money around Washington and Brussels, and then pulling the strings. People are so afraid of Google now."

Then this week, former *Forbes* reporter Kashmir Hill recounted a similar story.

According to Ms. Hill, she attended a meeting at which Google representatives encouraged *Forbes* to add a Google "+1" button to its articles, which would boost its standing in Google search results:

*This sounded like a news story to me. Google's dominance in search and news give it tremendous power over publishers. By tying search results to the use of Plus, Google was using that muscle to force people to promote its social network.*

*I asked the Google people if I understood correctly: If a publisher didn't put a +1 button on the page, its search results would suffer? The answer was yes.*

Ms. Hill reports that her article was abruptly removed from the site and scrubbed from internet search results, disturbingly.

Thus, an inherent tension emerged in recent years, as Google steadily accumulated power and global market dominance while a volatile populist movement emerged among the political left.

Now, as it finds itself less and less able to find reliable friends among the left, perhaps Google will wish that it had adhered more closely to its motto, and not made such a habit of alienating conservatives for over a decade.