



BIG TECH IS BIG BROTHER

BRENT BOZELL

The year is 1984. One company—Microsoft—dominates the computer world. It's their way or the highway. Conform or die.

This snapshot in time was perfectly captured in one of the most famous commercials in TV history. Set in a gray, dystopian future, row after row of men stare blankly at a giant screen from which Big Brother—the all-powerful leader from George Orwell's classic novel *1984*—addresses them.

Suddenly, riot police burst into the hall, chasing a beautiful, blonde woman in a white shirt and red shorts. Before they can grab her, she hurls a sledgehammer into the screen, shattering Big Brother and his grip on the masses. The narrator informs us that Apple's breakthrough product, the Macintosh computer, will be the device that sets us all free.

Looking back, Apple largely lived up to its promise. A new wave of companies, each in its own way, followed the example set by Apple's legendary CEO, Steve Jobs.

Google gave us instant access to vast amounts of information. Facebook gave us a new way to connect with friends, family, and the world. Twitter brought this world to us in real time. And YouTube allowed anyone with a smartphone to become a virtual broadcast network unto themselves.

It was glorious and empowering.

But that was yesterday. Today, it's 1984 all over again. Big Brother is back—with an important twist. Our former liberators now want to be our masters. Apple, Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, the giants of social media, are demanding conformity to *their* values. It's their way or the highway. Conform or die.

This image is perfectly captured not by an ad, but by this recent *real-life* scene: Row after row of men and women stare up at Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, as he makes a presentation—ironically—before a civil rights group.

"We only have one message for those who seek to push hate, division, and violence: You have no place on our platforms," Cook tells his audience. "You have no home here."

"Hate"? "Division"? According to whom?

The answer is obvious: according to Apple, Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. They are

becoming the Big Brother Orwell foresaw. Conform or die.

Cook's ideas are exactly the same as his fellow chief executives at Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Disagree with Big Brother on, say, politics, or morality, and Big Brother will shut you up by shutting you down. And what is it that Big Brother doesn't like? Well, Tim Cook, said it: anything that doesn't conform to his left-wing worldview. The examples are numerous and growing.

Meghan Murphy, a Canadian feminist, is permanently banned from Twitter for refusing to refer to the transgendered by their preferred pronoun, and for writing "women aren't men."

Google, Facebook and Twitter all at various times refused to carry political ads from Tennessee Republican candidate Marsha Blackburn, promoting her conservative views. She's hardly the only one this has happened to.

And, as many of you know, YouTube continues to restrict over 100 of PragerU's videos, finding them "inappropriate for children." These include titles like, "Why Did America Fight the Korean War?"

Broad-based studies by the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology and by Northwestern University have confirmed what these examples clearly suggest: bias against conservatives at Google and other Big Tech sites. And this is the bias we can plainly see. What we don't see, what Big Brother hides from us—what is referred to as "shadow banning"—may be even more pernicious.

If you're on the left, maybe you're okay with this. But if you're not on the left, or even if you are and you revere the First Amendment, you should be concerned. Very concerned. We are advancing swiftly toward an Orwellian, *1984* world of stifling, one-way-of-thinking conformity. This time, it's not a fictional story. It's real.

What's the solution? Simply return to the open market of ideas that served Big Tech so well for so long. Stop the censorship and let people make up their own minds. Otherwise America—and the rest of what has been known as the Free World—will cease to be free.

That's how serious the Big Tech threat is.

I'm Brent Bozell, founder of the Media Research Center, for Prager University.