

Written Representation 140

Name: Teo Geok Choo
Housewife

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新加坡國會特選委員會主席 張有福先生大鑑：

本人乃年屆八旬、持新加坡居民證 xxx 之家庭主婦。近來，本人得知政府欲立法應對假信息問題，今特修此函向貴特委會反映本人之想法。本人乃關注我國政事之獨立人士，並謹此聲明，本人不代表任何政黨，機構或組織，此信中表達之觀點乃本人之愚見。

假信息與謠言自古有之。縱觀我國歷史，我國歷史中多次重大事件皆有假信息出現。一九六四年種族暴亂時，有巫族團體發放傳單指華族正策劃謀害巫族同胞。一九六七年我國爆發縮陽症疫情，有謠言指食用注射過流感性疫苗的豬肉即患縮陽症。由此可見，假信息與謠言源自無知，並且乃人類社會普及之現象，但其影響力深遠，能使社會不穩。如今社交媒體被廣泛使用，使信息傳播愈迅速，亦增加假信息對社會所構之威脅。二〇一六年美國總統選舉，俄國涉嫌利用社交媒體散播大量假信息，干擾美國內政。

我國欲打擊假信息之時，須確保此舉不會令國人畏懼發言。須知哥白尼，伽利略發表日心論，達爾文發表物種演化論時，彼等之言論亦被世人詆為假信息。由此可見，事實，理論，意見之間只是一線之差，亦極難判斷信息孰真孰假。

政府打擊假信息之策略，不應著重於替人民分辨信息之真假。政府應採取軟硬兼施之態，以打擊假信息。首先，我國應加強教育，培養國人之批判性思維，使國人能自行判斷言論之真假。與此同時，本人認為，政府應加強信息之自由流通，並儘早效仿英國，美國，中華民國等國，制定《信息自由法》，向國人公開政府機關所擁之資訊。此舉能加強信息之透明度，賦予國人追求真相之能力，使許多攸關政治的假信息自然消失。若有緊急事故發生，例如外國勢力在我國大選時利用社交媒體散播大量假信息以干擾我國內政、或在恐怖襲擊時有國人惡意散播謠言擾亂民心，政府大可引用《內安法令》中之巨大權力應急，以應付散發此類假信息者。因此政府毋須另行立法應付類似事件。

今本人執筆於此，望貴特委會念其任重而道遠。鑑於本人高齡且行動不便，本人不願參加特選委員會之聽證會。若需進一步澄清本函內容，貴特委會可電郵聯絡本人。

即此順頌 大安
張玉珠 謹啟

(Translated)

To:

Mr Charles Chong,
Chairman of the Select Committee on Fake News

I am an eighty-year-old homemaker holding a Singapore identity card xxx. Recently, I got to know about the Government's plans to enact laws against fake news and I am writing in to the committee to express my views. I am an independent individual concerned about local politics, and I hereby declare that I do not represent any political party, institution or organization, and the views expressed herein are entirely personal.

Fake news have been in existence since ancient times. Looking back at our nation's history, there have been many major incidents where fake news have emerged. During the 1964 racial riots, there were pamphlets distributed by Malay organizations accusing Chinese of plotting to kill their Malay compatriots. In 1967, when there was a 'Koro epidemic', rumours spread that individuals would be infected with Koro if they consume pork from pigs that have been injected with the flu vaccine. As we can see, fake news and rumours stem from ignorance, and are common phenomena in human society, though their impact can be far reaching and may cause social instability. Today, social media is widely used and information is disseminated more rapidly, increasing the risks fake news bring to society. In the 2016 US Presidential Elections, Russia allegedly spread massive amount of fake news through social media in a bid to interfere in US domestic politics.

While Singapore plans to tackle the problem of fake news, we must ensure that this does not deter citizens from speaking up out of fear. One must remember that when Copernicus and Galileo published their theories on Heliocentrism, and Darwin published his Theory of Biological Evolution, they were all wrongly accused of propagating falsehoods. Thus, there is only a fine line between facts, theories and opinions, and it is extremely difficult to differentiate between genuine and fake news.

The Government's strategy in countering fake news should not focus on deciding for the people what is fake or genuine. Instead, it should adopt a 'carrot-and-stick' approach to counter falsehoods. Firstly, Singapore should do more in terms of education, to develop critical thinking amongst our citizens, so that they have the ability to identify fake and genuine information. At the same time, I suggest that the Government improve on the free flow of information, emulate the UK, US and Republic of China in legislating laws to ensure free flow of information as soon as possible, and make information held by the government available to the public. This can enhance the transparency of information, empower Singaporeans to investigate facts, and many political falsehoods would naturally dissipate. In the event of an emergency, for example, if foreign elements spread fake news through social media on a large scale with the intention of interfering in our internal affairs; or individuals spread malicious rumours to destabilise the nation psychologically during a terrorist attack, the Government can invoke its powers under the Internal Security Act to deal with the situation and those who spread the fake news. Therefore, it is not necessary for the Government to enact separate laws to deal with such incidents.

I will now end the letter and I hope the Select Committee will carry out this far reaching mission responsibly. As I have reached a ripe old age and face

difficulties getting about, I would like to decline invitations to attend the public hearings of the Select Committee. If further clarifications related to the contents of this letter are required, the Select Committee may correspond with me via email.

Lastly, may I wish you peace and good health!

Regards,

Zhang Yu Zhu