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Client	Harry Ridgewell
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Harry Ridgewell: Right. So my first question is, which news sources do you read, and which ones do you recommend?

Tim Berners-Lee: Well of course the point of view I've always had this attitude, that I've never had a favourite website. So to a certain extent, I've never recommended things, but I suppose I could say, so in general, I tend to use a pretty big mixture of things. But I tend to look at, for example, at a Twitter stream, and my Twitter streams, I follow all kinds of people and pull sources out of that. I've also have people individually sending me things in different chat channels. So different things like the web foundation, the web consortium, and ODI all will have things that they're discussing, so I end up reading all types of those things, or the software community ... So I can end up reading articles from all kinds of different things, different places. There are some things that I subscribe to: The Guardian and The Economist, both of which have good offline apps.

Harry Ridgewell: Yeah.

Tim Berners-Lee: Sorry, there's quite a few credentials I suppose to social media to encourage them, and help put that on the table.

Harry Ridgewell: So two years ago you said that you wanted to crowd source a Magna Carta for the web, and I was just wondering what has happened since then?

Tim Berners-Lee: Yeah well two years ago was... It was two, three years ago, must be going on now, that was triggered by I had two editors which [inaudible 00:02:09] 23rd, 25th anniversary of the web, and so we thought we'd use that opportunity to really get people who didn't normally think about the web, took the web for granted normally didn't think about the other 50% of the time don't use it. I think it was the probably the other 60% at that point, it's 50% now. So at that point, that was 2014, the start of the web was 1999, so the 25th was there in 2014. So we had a more public general discussion of what sort of web we wanted, so the tag line was "What we want" and we had where we want for the South Bank, and [inaudible 00:03:14]. First of all, we had that where we wanted, and what kind of conferences, had this web on track and we just sort of hash what we want.

[inaudible 00:03:26] Which was where we on coalition, with lots of non profits in this Spain's, just getting, helping with asking questions generally. And while they came out of it very early on, was I think it was a Guardian headline was "Tim wants the magna carta for the web" and that took off for two reasons. One it was very catchy, so in the U.K. we didn't call it originally the Magna Carta for the web cause it's a bit U.K. focused but it turns out even in other countries they [inaudible 00:04:03] Magna Carta worked pretty well. And it happened to be the anniversary of the Magna Carta the following year, so what happened was the people who were doing the whole-who were celebrating the Magna Carta, used the same opportunity to say "Alright if we were making-", asking children for example in school, "If you were making a Magna Carta today then how would it

be different? What would you put in it now? What would be the right thing to insist on?" And lots of those were internet rights, the right to choose a neutral network, the right to choose an open free[inaudible 00:04:46] web. Could you take whatever you want on the net without being blocked without being fined?

Harry Ridgewell: Okay.

Tim Berners-Lee: So that was a sort of [inaudible 00:05:07] sort of celebration. Meanwhile out of that time came in Brazil for example, there has been a lot of movement towards it for example, and Brazil actually created it and signed into law, [inaudible 00:05:21] internet, a simple charter for the internet for example. And sort of thing in a way, there's a lot of different movements across the world, they tended to be National events though they were aware it isn't a National thing because the laws work by jurisdiction, so if you want to get a charter signed up in your level of jurisdiction, it has to be a sort of National movement.

Harry Ridgewell: Do you think that a list of trusted news sources should be decided as part of that Magna Carta for the web?

Tim Berners-Lee: Ah, do I think the list of trusted news sources should be-? I think that other people would be horrified by the thought that anything like "Hey there's no trusted news sources".

No the web in its early days when it was a lot of blogs, then there were two things that you tried to do in your blog, you tried to make it textually gripping and interesting to the people who were reading it, and you tried to link to good things. And the art of spotting good things, and really the way the web grew, was that everybody tried to link to good things, and so if you followed blogs, you would find links to increasingly higher and higher quality. So in other words, everybody was trying to make their own - there was sort of this list mania in a way, and some web pages became mostly content and hoped to be listed everywhere. And some pages were just lists of things like that. [inaudible 00:07:08] those sort of things.

And sort of Google took advantage of that structure, and used all those things and used the structures of those things, and decided which things to favour in its search results. And still it obviously still works like that. So I think the important thing then and now is that anybody can have their own list, so different people can compete, you can have different - You can have the American community of Art and Sciences compete with the National Academy of Sciences to add the list of which sources, which journals they recognise for example, or something for tenure. Things like that, there's always been these sorts of competitions which what you don't want to have is one web line, I wouldn't have the world wide web because life is... Constantly challenged, and it would be social centralization to have a single list, and it wouldn't be in the spirit of the web.

Harry Ridgewell: What do you think of the idea of countries jointly state funding a new service in order to produce something that is factually reliable and more internationally focused in its thinking?

Tim Berners-Lee: So I think in general that I've always growing up appreciated [inaudible 00:08:54] like the BBC world service, that's the sort of thing[inaudible 00:08:58] I think, I always liked the BBC model where you'd have a group of people who love [inaudible 00:09:08] who are paid better, basically out of the life and [inaudible 00:09:12] revenue to go and do the best independent job they can. I think there are other models as well that work like project organisations, if they can get support and that support is sort of government funded taxually but it has to be the only model at all, but I think it's valuable to have this outlet in this world of-

Harry: And how do you think fake news can be tackled?

Tim Berners Lee: I think the label fake news covers a really complicated, interesting space of many different dysfunctional mechanisms. There's not one in terms ... so there are many reasons. For example, you can look at some systems, which have been introduced. You can for example, look at just the ability to do targeted advertising, which in general for commercial advertising is very ... is a win-win situation. The advertiser gets to sell more, oh, the person who's being advertised to gets to see ... by it has more rapidly ... by it being really strong the things, which they are likely to want to buy.

Well, then in targeted advertising you use the same technology for a political organisation, it's to a certain extent undemocratic because a political organisation could say completely different things to different parties, and it is unaccountable. If you could say one thing to me knowing that I've got children, talk about how you're going to invest in education. Then at the same time you could be sending out ads in the same slot to different people where you know don't have kids, saying they'll save money on education. You could be completely unaccountably ... using that technology. There's an argument that that is undemocratic.

It came about to people having issues using systems, being using some systems, which actually ... or they hadn't thought about the unintended consequences. You can ... I think the power of fake news is the ability of humanity to divide itself into different pools. Where you have one group, which are scientific and amazed at the ... what sort of things people ... the weird things people will be believe, and the conspiracy theory groups. The other group, they live off conspiracy theories, they'll believe anything they hear from a authority or science, and who will have a completely inconsistent view of the world, which ... but not consistent with reality. Quite consistent with themselves and where they're in an aqua chamber.

I think in that case one of the interesting things is to point and to say, "Well, is there something, which you've got that's being promoted by the way people use the web? Will Twitter, for example, will Facebook, will your social media of choice? Does it actually promote that sort of thing?" Then let's do ... I mean, because it's really important to do the research to find out exactly what effect, you know?

Because it could be ... maybe we shouldn't really blame those people so much as they the people engineered the software they use, because the software they use is encouraging them. It's built to feed them more of what they had before, and connect them to more people who like the same stuff. If the software has been deliberately built to make the aqua chambers and thought bubbles, then the responsibility is with the people who built them. The people, and in a way with us, thinking people, who are looking with concern at the world, and haven't ... and are not holding them to account, saying you are lying. You as a journalist,

I as a member of the web should be holding these people and these web properties to account and say, "Oh, you need to do better. You need to reprogram these things so we get a less polarised world."

Harry: Many websites and apps provide us with free services on the condition we give our data to them. If we didn't allow them to use our data, would this mean we'd have to start to pay for many of the free online services we currently use?

Tim Berners Lee: Well, that's sort of a simplistic question. I think in part there's not a critical relationship ... there are business models. For example, you can find a site with advertising, which does not abuse news, this kind of a thing. You could find a site with advertising, which uses accurate knowledge of what the user has done on your site, and starts to build an accurate profile that never shares it with another site. Never uses it to, for example, end up changing ... never shares it with an insurance company, or a potential employer. Never has nasty unexpected consequences.

There's a couple that's using personal data to drive effective targeted advertising. The way they're doing it without ... avoiding the worst that it ... without monetizing the data to the highest bidder and with a [inaudible 00:05:38]. I think also that ... The interesting business model people do, for example, pay one of the ... one we have been talking about is where people pay for somewhere to store their data, so that they store all their own ... store all their social graph in a personal Cloud they didn't pay for. Maybe it's a personal Cloud where it gets it free, but they get it for free with something else. They get it with their internet connection, or they get it for free with their university membership, for example.

People end up getting someone to store their data that they control ... they are starting to have control of it, because it's stored in a personal Cloud. Then you may see applications start to retain a lot of unfit data, which is much more interested in powerful applications because they have access to all that data. People may end up paying for applications just like we used to do when public went out to PC. You could buy or rent a very nice photo album, vacation management programme that somebody's still launching and working on. You might use it for the sports fans for example. You'll loop users' own data that you store yourself in your personal Cloud. There you have a business model where actually the user incumbents aren't in the loop.

Harry: Are there any internet related laws in the US or the UK that you think need to be scrapped?

Tim Berners Lee: In the US and UK those ... one of the things you could go to though... you should go to webfoundation.org and look at ... there's a lot of information about that, about lots of countries, including those two.

In general, I think ... so in the UK, for example the government's mind is too ... there's much too much power, it's not sort of accountable. There's much too

much power, until Greece. Meanwhile, we've got ... we have a good ruling in the US, concerning how much time we need to talk about the fact that in the US the FCC chairman Ajit Pai is saying that he will overturn the ... prevent the ruling for net neutrality.

There are lots of laws around the internet on both sides of the Atlantic. There's about ... there are laws about spying, there's laws about government spying, there's laws about privacy and there's laws about net neutrality.

My concern is, in America maybe, having been in a leading position really on the internet for a long time with the net neutrality is it will then ... it will not really be an open internet, in the sense of plausible point of view of a start-up. I talked to good bit of start-ups in Washington couple days ago, and they were concerned that if the net neutrality goes away they will end up ... if they produce this service, even though it's cool, they will have to negotiate it and have it unblocked by each ISP, and that will be impossible and very transient. Whereas if they had started their service in the UK or Europe they would just launch it, like you do with bombs, you just launch a new website. And you don't have to worry about it being blocked by different ISPs.

Their Obama era regulations ... rules about net neutrality was very valuable in the US, and we should try to preserve them.

Harry: Are there any internet related laws in US or the UK that you think need to be created?

Tim Berners Lee: Well, I think in the long term in the US and in the internet, if we can't end up with a ... if we don't get in the state where regulation and rule-making by the FCC can preserve net neutrality then lots of people have suggested that the more stable thing to do is to have the laws.

Harry: I've read before that you said you wouldn't get an Amazon Echo or Google Home device. I was just wondering if you could explain why?

Tim Berners Lee: Why I suppose I'm not very keen on either, I don't think I relish the idea of having pieces of my ... they're in all conversation, recorded and sent off the house and used in arbitrary ways. In general, I think it is interesting to use AI. I'd like to use AI as a powerful agent and that the speaking conversational interface is one of the valuable ways.

In a way if there were guarantees, or if it could be where there's architecture where the AI sits in my house and I can unplug it, and I control it and it's open choice, then it's interesting, then I'm interested to have it. Then if I have root on that device and if I can control it then I would be interested in it listening to our conversations and trying to help take it ... help us figure out where to answer.

Harry: How is the World Wide Web Foundation working to make internet prices lower, so it's accessible to all?

Tim Berners Lee: If you look at a4ai.org, the Alliance for Affordable Internet, first of all, it's complicated on affordability because to get internet ... 'cause that is for a lot of people is the constraint. For a lot of people, an increasing number of people, they do have signal, but the ... It's so important that they can A, afford a phone or some sort of device, and B, they can afford the data plan.

The devices have been coming down, so now the critical thing is affordability. We have this one-for-two. You should have one gigabit for two percent of your annual income, so that ... If your monthly income two gigabits a month, two percent of your monthly income. The, whereas we will paint as examples of people in Africa who would try and spend 25% of their income on the device of the plan, because it will put above their engagement ... actually true potential, which they could ... which the rest of the village could leverage maybe, but because it was spent hopefully they can empower them so much, much more than not having access to the internet.

What does A4, what does it do? Partly, it is making sure that companies and current ... and governments all talk to each other to make sure that there is good open competition. To make sure that you get real open internet, not a restricted internet, which only gets you on websites, but a real open internet. The last man can give it to a monopoly supplier who then can hike the price up. In part, it's just making sure there's a good open competition for both the devices, and for collectivity.

It grants me up to taxes in the early age of internet. People used to look at it as the sort of thing, which I should be taxed as a luxury. Because it was the sort of thing, which was used by executives in their private jets, and that actually had ... that's very counterproductive.

Harry: How can we make the internet accessible and affordable for those living in rural areas, where it's not economically advantageous for internet providers to put in these services?

Tim Berners Lee: I suppose there are two interesting ways. One is, subsidies in different countries, subsidies in different forms. I mean, in Britain for example, traditionally that was how we got telephones. You used to pay the same price to have your telephone installed in Wales, which is a ... when you consider that now open pops the hatch and telephone's out, it's pretty significant, tall order. Effectively ... so various forms of universal service fund common accord where everybody contributes a little bit on their phone bill and then that is used to finance getting a fibre over through the mountain passes and so on.

There's also of course interestingly when you get to the point that you have really large crops like the inside of America is very big, and even though there are a lot of people are cabled up around the edge to the internet. It's interesting talking about it now, low orbit satellites. For example, I don't know about whether the Loon Project balloons will work out, but having the Loon Project to

demonstrate that you really ... it's worth it to take a creative look at this sort of thing; this sort of issue.

Harry: Do you think that in such rural locations where there is poor internet service, that the best way forward is either government or community internet service providers?

Tim Berners Lee: I think a town should have the right to do that. I know Concord, Massachusetts has its own municipal light plant, the Concord Municipal Light Plant, which provides power to its citizens, and it has a ... which is a local company. I don't think ... it's not town-owned but there's a lot of the town people are on the board, and it's specific to the Concord area. It also provides internet coverage.

I think that a township has the right to do that. I know you think, "What or whoever would stop them?" Well, there are sometimes those who have been in the States pushing as if they should actually make it illegal for a town to provide its own data or its own internet. Yeah.

Certainly a town should be able to take things into their own hands, and when you think what about when it comes to laying fibre optic, it's always amazing when a bunch of farmers can get down to it, get up to with it when they are allowed to organise and they want to get things connected.

Harry: What was using the internet like before the invention of the web?

Tim Berners Lee: There's a question from somebody who wasn't there, or who was young at the time. The internet existed, so when I invented the web, when was it, 1989? The web was ... the internet was invented in 1969, so it had been around for 20 years. The good thing was it had been invented as a platform. There was Listserv, and they just said the package has got to have a port number on it, indicating which sort of new protocol it is, but we're not going to tell you about it, and they didn't make any assumptions about what protocols would be used on it.

The thing was originally you just had to log on remotely from one computer to another, and there's a file transfer protocol, where you could sort of log on to another computer, and then you'd run very specific ... You'd run the files, you're told it's a file transfer protocol server, which has just come on as like you could list the directory and then change that ... see into a directory and then you could pull a file mine.

It was clunky, and you had to find your way around the remote file system. The file transfer part of it, you wouldn't have to learn how a whole other operating system worked. Then since ... during that 20 years there was email, there was network news, and all of these network news organisation articles, like a magazine system. I could use network news to tell people about the world wide web by sending news messages out to people who were interested in the next machine, or to people who were interested in hyper tech for example.

With email, I could have a list, and they had made new server for the interested people. And so they were just in websites and there was lots of moving. By 1989 world wide web had spread, I really ... I mean, besides everybody at the time wanted ... all right, you know, we should wrap this up. Maybe it's a good look, the last question.

Using the internet it was exciting, because of the potential of the internet. The fact that you could write new programmes, but I could design the web without asking Listserv permission. Likely such permission was faced, but it was much more clunky and it wasn't a thing for the faint-hearted; if you wanted to write make sure you mentioned Listserv. Whereas being even to just pick your way across it, received a rather [crosstalk 00:21:07] important thing to set up.

Harry: Are you worried by ... I'm probably going to pronounce his name wrong ... but, the American chairman of the Federal Communications Committee wanting to repeal Obama era rules, which enshrined in law the principles of net neutrality?

Tim Berners Lee: Yes, I just told you, or talked about that. Ajit Pai is his name. I've been asked down to Washington a couple times recently, talked to him. The first time talked to a bunch of people. Yes, I'm very concerned about it. We are running out of time sorry. Go ahead and ask one last question.

Certainly, yes, you look at my tweets about it. Go to the Web Foundation, webfoundation.org, site you will see what I actually think about that. You will see the message, the testimony sent to them in response to that core purpose. The core mission you can find on the Web Foundation site. You can check, there's also a guide interview I did in DC about that. It was put in USA Today.

Harry: Okay. All right, then my final question is the US seems to take a more no barred limits on freedom of speech approach than the UK. What do you think the rules of freedom of speech should be on the internet?

Tim Berners Lee: I think the right for people to be able to say anything, and the right for ... you know, to protect people from bullying, for example, these are some areas where there's no simple answer. Where it's so ... Some people will be extreme and say, that we should have everything, all speech should be free. Some people will say there should no free speech, nobody should be anonymous on the internet. Actually, I believe like the most people, they feel if you are whistle blowing you should have the ability to use anonymity on the net to expose bad things that are happening.

Where you would get on top of it, you would discover it, and it you abuse the ... like bullying, feminist bloggers for example, then you ... there should be systems for taking that away. That system has to be based on what we all decide at any one point in time. It's difficult, 'cause it crosses different boundaries, different country boundaries. People have very different attitudes, solutions. Not just country boundaries, of course, its cultural boundaries, churches, and so on.

Different people, groups of people have different attitudes about what's acceptable, but we have to come to some compromise about exactly where the line is, and then we have to solve it with the legal system, so that if I think you stepped over the line and you don't think you have, we can take it to some form of arbitration, we can take some form of our social place where typically you have a court, which will sit and will look at the rules that will have been written, and will look at the act, which was done and will decide whether or not the act was permissible or not. That's how these things work. It's complicated, and we have to keep readjusting it every few years, because people's fear about different sides of the extremes gets modified by events and so on, so it's a good-

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