

# Fifth Estate Press

THE CITIZEN JOURNALISM PLATFORM

FIFTHSTATEPRESS.COM

THE THREE CLASSICAL ESTATES OF THE REALM ARE THE EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT. THE MAINSTREAM PRESS CONSTITUTES THE FOURTH ESTATE. THE FIFTH ESTATE BELONGS TO CITIZEN JOURNALISTS.

## FIFTH ESTATE PRESS IS A SOCIAL MEDIA APP FOR CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

Fifth Estate Press is a web application which offers the ability to instantly post and share rich media content, including text, images, web links and embedded video. Members have dedicated profile pages, can interact via comments and can receive instant notifications, both on screen and optionally by email.

Fifth Estate Press is:

- financially independent
- committed to respecting privacy
- not aligned with political ideologies

We have no ties with any political institutions, think tanks or special interest groups.

Our mission is to empower the Fifth Estate - the citizen journalists of the world who play a crucial role in providing balance to the corporate media and calling to account those who spread misinformation and propaganda.



WHEN I TELL THE TRUTH, IT IS NOT FOR  
THE SAKE OF CONVINCING THOSE WHO  
DO NOT KNOW IT, BUT FOR THE SAKE  
OF DEFENDING THOSE THAT DO

WILLIAM BLAKE

## WHY FIFTH ESTATE PRESS?

**In order to understand the motivations behind the creation of Fifth Estate Press we need to examine the political and social landscape of 2019.**

As of 2019, social media is controlled by a small number of immensely powerful

companies who have taken it upon themselves to function both as political gate keepers and censors, and who have made it their mission to influence the opinions of millions of users in ways that constitute an erosion of core democracy in many countries.

This fact alone is enough to explain why fully independent and politically agnostic platforms such as Fifth Estate Press are necessary, but there are even more profound issues which Fifth Estate Press aims to address.

The infringement of privacy has been rampant among the major internet companies for many years. We don't really know the full extent to which our private communications and data have been harvested but the revelations of Edward Snowden in 2013 suggest that it is very much greater than anyone has officially admitted. Our private data on Facebook has been sold and our emails are constantly monitored by automated processes to throw ads back at us. This is what we know. The full extent of the intrusion into our privacy is probably much worse.

## **FIFTH ESTATE PRESS WILL NEVER SELL USER DATA AND WILL VIGOROUSLY OPPOSE GOVERNMENT COMPULSION TO REVEAL PRIVATE INFORMATION**

Beyond the issue of privacy, there is also a clear agenda in large media companies to influence opinion by de-platforming users, filtering the flow of information, and applying dubious "fact checking" protocols on user created content. This is all is being done to serve political and corporate agendas.

The practice of journalism was always influenced by politics, but the war on independent research and censorship of non-mainstream opinion on almost any topic has now reached a fever pitch. The corporate oligarchies, along with many academic institutions and government bodies, are demoting free speech in favour of protected special interest groups and non-negotiable pseudo-scientific dogmas.

## REALITY Vs AUTHORITY



IN QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE, THE  
AUTHORITY OF A THOUSAND IS NOT  
WORTH THE HUMBLE REASONING OF A  
SINGLE INDIVIDUAL  
GALILEO GALILEI

One of the main obstacles we face is cognitive dissonance and blind trust in authority, which often makes us ignore empirical facts.

Our tendency to defer to authority, or to go with the perceived consensus, is a deep, tribal aspect of human nature, which no

doubt helped us survive in the distant past. However, in the age of sophisticated mass marketing and psychological warfare it makes us vulnerable to manipulation and brainwashing.

Blind trust in authority or perceived consensus is a difficult habit to shake, and it may explain why progress is so slow in reaching people on highly controversial issues which have been the subject of heavy propaganda in the mainstream media.

The same tendency can also lead us to believe conspiracy theories which lack empirical evidence. It often depends on who we see as an authority.

To counter this, we need to always give rational thought and empirical evidence precedence over tribal affiliations of any kind: political, ethnic or even family. This also means being willing to learn and change our point of view based on new information.

On an editorial level, Fifth Estate Press will always strive to keep evidence-based research front and centre and avoid the tendency to solidify around "groupthink" or authoritative opinion, and we encourage the same in our members.

## HOW IS FIFTH ESTATE PRESS DIFFERENT TO OTHER SOCIAL APPS?

Let's begin by stating what Fifth Estate Press is not:

- **NOT A SOCIAL NETWORKING APP**

The purpose of Fifth Estate Press is not to build a social network - although this may happen due to shared interests - but to disseminate knowledge.

- **NOT FOR SOCIAL SIGNALLING**

Fifth Estate Press is not a place for sharing your holiday pics, what you had for lunch, showing off your body or posting sexually explicit material.

- **NOT A VEHICLE FOR "SELF-EXPRESSION"**

Fifth Estate Press is primarily aimed at providing quality research and argued opinion rather than empowering members to simply vent their feelings. As such it is

fundamentally different in purpose to other social media apps, and there is a level of responsibility expected of members to uphold the values that Fifth Estate Press represents.

Let's talk about the positive qualities which Fifth Estate Press strives to embody:

- **JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY**

This means, at the most basic level, not deliberately promoting false stories or rumours and choosing to report on matters that are in the public interest, with a sincere motivation to get at the truth rather than win a point. It also requires maintaining a level of civility in conversation and refraining from making threats, defamatory accusations or exposing sensitive personal details of other members.

- **EVIDENCE BASED ARGUMENTS**

The core test for inclusion of material on Fifth Estate Press is evidence. If you have no evidence for claims and are merely speculating, this is not generally good criteria for posting material. The definition of "evidence" is not necessarily physical - it can include things like a well-reasoned analysis of a position with which you agree or disagree. In this case the evidence is the quality of your reasoning.

- **LOGICAL THINKING**

Logical fallacies are widespread in articles and commentaries these days. Fifth Estate Press strives to minimise the use of these kinds of false arguments.

- **SCIENTIFIC METHOD**

Fifth Estate Press respects the scientific method, but we don't support the use of arguments like "the science is settled" which are generally based on the fallacies of authority or consensus. The scientific method is a process, rather than a set of conclusions.

## **HOW WILL FIFTH ESTATE PRESS DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS?**

We strongly believe that posted material should stand on its own merit, providing it meets our guidelines as already stated.

Fifth Estate Press takes the general position that every member is an independent publisher and will not assume liability for the publications of its members.

Below we present a selection of issues, with an example of how we would handle such situations.

- **HATE SPEECH / VILIFICATION**

"Hate speech" is a term which has been over-used to the point where it has become somewhat ambiguous. Internally we take a straightforward approach. In order to qualify as hate speech, the speech must be truly hateful, rather than merely critical or morally censorious. If a member is deemed to have broken a hate speech law that member should be notified by the complainant. Fifth Estate Press's Terms of Service will address the legal side of such matters in detail.

- **DEFAMATION**

Fifth Estate Press's Terms of Service will address the legal side of defamation.

- **COPYRIGHT VIOLATION**

As with defamation the Terms of Service will address this issue legally.

- **COURT ORDERS**

Fifth Estate Press will comply with court orders which apply within the jurisdiction where it operates as a business, which has yet to be determined, except where such orders would compromise the privacy of members.

## **HOW WILL FIFTH ESTATE PRESS DEAL WITH CONTROVERSY ?**

There are many issues which attract polarised viewpoints, leading to heated online exchanges and flame wars. Moderation protocols need to be developed and this needs to happen at a community level (see next section).

It is not the aim of Fifth Estate Press to steer debate in any direction, but neither will we refrain from expressing an editorial bias.

There are far too many issues to give this a complete coverage, but we present below some examples in which we acknowledge our own bias where applicable.

- **RELIGION**

Fifth Estate Press takes an agnostic position regarding spiritual matters. Members are of course free to argue any position on this topic as long as they observe the code of conduct, especially in the area of civility in discussion.

- **GENDER**

While we respect peoples' personal choices regarding how they present themselves, Fifth Estate Press acknowledges the underlying biological reality of gender and respectfully rejects the notion that gender is primarily socially constructed. We are opposed to any legislation which would compel the use of gender-neutral pronouns in speech. This may offend some people. If members find our position offensive then perhaps Fifth Estate Press is not for them.

- **ABORTION**

Fifth Estate Press falls somewhere in the middle on this question. While we abhor the practice of late term abortion unless medically necessary, we also respect the reproductive rights of women.

- **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Fifth Estate Press rejects the political agenda behind climate change alarmism. We advocate a science-based approach to looking at the specific issues.

- **MANDATORY VACCINES & MEDICINES**

Fifth Estate Press takes a strong position to defend the rights of adults to refuse medical procedures for themselves and their children - which applies to all medicines, treatments and vaccines. We strongly oppose mandatory vaccination. We believe there should be informed consent for every medical procedure, where that is possible.

- **LGBTQ RIGHTS**

Fifth Estate Press respects LGBTQ rights 100%. We strongly defend the sexual freedom of consenting adults. We are neutral on same sex marriage. This should not be interpreted as meaning that we accept all LGBTQ anti-discrimination legislation as it stands, or that we think the LGBTQ lifestyle is above criticism.

- **CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

Fifth Estate Press is agnostic on all conspiracy theories and supports a forensic/scientific approach to separating truth from fiction on specific issues.

- **THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

Our general view is probably best summed by the phrase "war is a racket". The issues regarding specific conflicts are too complex to enumerate in this document.

- **THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS**

We are somewhere in the middle on this question. Clearly there needs to be regulation of weapon ownership, but we should not forget that totalitarian regimes in the past have confiscated guns under the false pretext of keeping people safe. There is a great danger in sacrificing essential liberty for temporary safety.

- **POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Broadly speaking, Fifth Estate Press takes a classical liberal stance, but we are not ideologically bound to issues. We are generally opposed to collectivist, "greater good" arguments, as these are often used in a dishonest way to push agendas. Economically we support a free market. We don't propose an ideological solution to the world's

social and economic problems. We do aim to stimulate debate in order to uncover truth - and that is where our political agenda stops.

## **THE CURRENT FREE SPEECH CLIMATE**

In 2019 we are seeing an increasing level of censorship from the major social media companies. Citizen journalists are being de-platformed daily for violating "community guidelines" that are ambiguous and arbitrary.

Although there are many platforms which provide decent alternatives to the social media giants, only Fifth Estate Press is founded on core principles of truth and integrity. For this reason, we suggest that Fifth Estate Press fulfils a unique role on the internet today.

## **MODERATION**

Our guiding principle is that we should try to keep the platform as free as possible without compromising the safety and privacy of members, our legal obligations or our charter.

Our aim is to host content which is credible and well presented. For published stories (see next section) we expect content to meet the journalistic standards of a news media publication. This means that stories will be subject to moderation for quality in some cases.

Inevitably, situations will develop where content must be removed or members need to be censured or banned, due to threats, doxxing, spam or abusive posts.

Protocols for moderation will be developed in consultation with our members.

The specifics will be covered in our Terms of Service.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

We have already touched on a few aspects of members' responsibilities and the limitations on expression. In addition to this we will provide a detailed code of conduct which new members will need to agree to before signing up.

Core principles of the code of conduct are as follows:

- **THREATS & CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

The platform must not be used to make threats of harm against any individuals or groups or to conspire to engage in criminal activity.

- **PORNOGRAPHY**

The use of the platform for pornography is expressly banned. Lewd images will be

deleted and anything which may be exploitative or illegal will be reported to the relevant authorities.

- **CIVILITY**

There will be no bans on specific words, but we expect members to be civil when differences of opinion crop up.

- **PRIVATE INFORMATION STAYS PRIVATE**

There should be no sharing of sensitive private information of others without express written permission from the person whose information you are sharing.

- **MARKETING & SPAM**

Members may not use the platform for marketing products and services unless this is done with permission from Fifth Estate Press Admin as paid, sponsored posts (a feature which we have yet to develop).

- **TOLERANCE IS KEY**

Members are expected to be tolerant of the choices of others in religion, sexuality and cultural practices. This does not preclude criticising ideologies or cultural practices, which is something we allow and encourage, and does not preclude taking a principled position on something you see as immoral or criminal, but it does not give you the right to vilify or condemn people you disagree with.

- **ISLAMOPHOBIA & ETHNO-NATIONALISM**

Many people these days oppose immigration of Muslims or wish to have Muslims expelled from their countries. This platform does not welcome publication of content along these lines. This does not mean you are not free to criticise the ideology and cultural practices of Islam (or any religion), however there is a line between intelligent criticism and vilification. We expect you to understand and respect that line.

- **TROLLS NOT WELCOME**

Fifth Estate Press provides an environment for serious, sincere discussion. Those who would use the platform to provoke, denigrate or troll other members are not welcome.

## POSTS & STORIES - THE CONTENT TYPES

Fifth Estate Press allows you to create 2 types of content: posts and stories.

- **POSTS**

Posts are under 1000 characters, and may contain links, images or embedded video. The mechanism is very similar to the user experience of Facebook. Links are automatically unfurled to reveal images and meta data. Video links are automatically converted into embedded video. Images can be uploaded from your device or from other social media accounts. The purpose of posts is to share information quickly and easily. Posts are not expected to be vetted for 100% accuracy.

- **STORIES**

Stories can be any length, and provide standard blogging features, like adding a title, WYSIWYG text editing, tags and rich media content. One reason why we keep posts short is to encourage our content creators to create stories, which have a bigger reach and better search engine optimisation. Stories are held to a higher standard of journalistic quality.

## THE BUSINESS MODEL

For a period, until the app has established itself, membership and all features will be free, however if the platform becomes popular quickly we may need to canvas for funds to pay server costs which can escalate dramatically as bandwidth on services increases.

In the medium term, Fifth Estate Press will generate revenue through crowd funding, subscriptions, paid content and sponsored posts.

- **CROWD FUNDING**

After the initial beta testing phase, we will be looking to crowd fund the development of new features (see timeline section).

- **PAID CONTENT**

We believe that providing a mechanism for content creators to get paid is essential for developing a vibrant and independent alternative media environment.

- **MICRO PAYMENTS WITH BITCOIN**

Cryptocurrencies figure largely in our plans. The key to making paid content work is to facilitate micro payments, and the bitcoin lightning network, which allows for instant funds transfer with very low fees, is currently the best candidate for enabling this capability. Content creators will be able to get paid per story by other subscribers directly from their cryptocurrency wallets.

- **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

There will be a small monthly fee to be a subscriber. Subscribers will also be content creators. We will implement subscriptions initially using credit card merchant services but over time we aim to implement a bitcoin or ethereum smart contract solution.

- **SPONSORED CONTENT**

Fifth Estate Press will avoid all use of Google AdSense and similar products, since these products use tracking cookies which are an unwarranted intrusion on privacy.

We will look for direct sponsors who wish to promote products and services which are genuine and ethical.

## **FUTURE ROADMAP**

Documents such as this are usually written at the beginning of a project with the aim of raising funds. In this case version 1.0 of the app is already up and running.

Our roadmap for the future includes the following:

- Subscription system
- Android / iOS apps
- Bitcoin wallet
- Paid content
- Asset management for images & video
- Encrypted instant messaging

Progress to date has been achieved by hard work on a very small budget. We hope to be able to use crowd funding to fast track future development.

## **INVESTORS AND PARTNERS**

If you would like to invest or partner in this project, and you agree with our mission statement as outlined in this document please email [truthstorm@Fifthestatepress.com](mailto:truthstorm@Fifthestatepress.com).

If you are interested in partnering on a technical or business level please provide details on your skills and experience.

## **LEGAL REPRESENTATION**

Fifth Estate Press will be hosting important material which is controversial, and which may attract legal action of various kinds.

We adhere to a strict code of conduct in terms of the type of content which may be shared so that, when a problem arises, we can defend our right to free speech vigorously.

In the event a legal dispute does arise we may canvas members for donations to support defending such cases. We also look forward to working with legally trained people in order to develop a robust strategy for handling legal disputes.

## **TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

Fifth Estate Press is built on the following technologies

- NodeJS framework
- Meteor framework
- Typescript
- ReactJS front-end framework
- Material Design CSS framework
- Bootstrap CSS framework
- Mongo DB
- Atlassian Bitbucket version control

## **OPEN SOURCE PLATFORM**

Our goal is to ultimately release the entire Fifth Estate Press code base as an open source platform so that others may use the core system to create their own communities.

Open sourcing the code is something that would happen after the product has gained traction and established itself over 2-3 years.