

Right to protest lost in the 'wash up'

Published: January 15, 2026, 7:28 pm

[Digital economy bill rushed through wash-up in late night session |](#)  [Technology |](#)  [guardian.co.uk](#)

Web sites like Wikileaks have been vital to ensuring that important information has been obtainable in the public domain. Information, for example, on Barclays Bank and its tax planning.

But last night the government rushed through the Digital Economy Bill which, as the Guardian notes included:

[A] new clause [that] allows the secretary of state for business to order the blocking of "a location on the internet which the court is satisfied has been, is being or is likely to be used for or in connection with an activity that infringes copyright".

The Labour MP John Hemming protested that this could mean the blocking of the whistleblower site Wikileaks, which carries only copyrighted work. Stephen Timms for the government said that it would not want to see the clause used to restrict freedom of speech — but gave no assurance that sites like Wikileaks would not be blocked.

That makes yesterday another bad day in the history of this Labour government and the right to protest.

Shame on them.

Yet again, just when you needed a real Labour party a poor imitation came along.