

The Times wants charities to stop campaigning. Watch ou...

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These are two headlines from a Times email this morning:

The first is, admittedl

The NGOs have become an enormously powerful fifth estate which uses the bully pulpit of conscience and emotional manipulation to lobby national governments and dominate the cultural climate.

des this:

Yet because of their charitable aura they are not held fully accountable. The Oxfam scandal has exposed this culture of impunity. As Priti Patel observes, however, this is but the tip of a sanctimonious and morally compromised iceberg which now needs to be hauled into view.

Of course I am happy for better regulation to prevent abuse. I'd start with that at Westminster and move on from there. Include charities by all means. Who could say no?

But what has that to do with regulation of charities' right to express an opinion?

Is the National Trust to be denied a voice on conservation?

Or the RSPB one on conservation?

And should Cancer Research be denied the right to talk about the resources required to tackle that disease?

Must children's charities no longer call for better regulation?

Or education charities be told they cannot express an opinion on curriculum reform?

Because all of those lobby, extensively. As do many more charities on many other issues.

Is that what we really want?

Do we really think that because some people have undoubtedly behaved wholly unacceptably and maybe illegally that the whole charity sector should be silenced?

And if so, where does this end? With the end of free speech? That would be the inevitable consequence.