

Words can incite hate

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I read this yesterday [in the conclusion to a newsletter](#) from the Institute for Economic Affairs:

Speech is not violence. Words cannot injure or compel a person to hate or riot. Consequently, the state has very little business policing it, and the outcomes are usually dire when it tries.

The author was someone called Harrison Griffiths, who is apparently the IEA Communications Manager.

It's odd that someone styling themselves as a communications manager does not think words can injure or incite action. The whole reason to communicate is to persuade another of the relevance of the action you promote. And if the action that is promoted is to incite violence on the basis of hate then, of course, words can injure, whether that be the direct result of that violence or the indirect result of the threat implicit in it. Anyone claiming otherwise is telling an obvious untruth, in my opinion. If they claim they are not, then again in my opinion, they are seriously deluded, and question has to be asked as to why they might have adopted this position.

I have long been worried about the activities of the IEA and its related think tanks. Their corrosive role in society has been quite extraordinary. Given my work on tax havens in the past, I have long run up against them. But, of all the dangerous things I have seen them suggest this might be the most dangerous of all. The idea that words can be used with indifference as to the consequence is so wrong it is hard to imagine anyone defending it.

The question is, in that case, why is the IEA adopting this position? The newsletter implies that the comment is about their right to continue to promote an anti-migrant agenda. They dislike it being suggested that this might promote racial hatred, even though the evidence that it does appears very clear. But could it be more sinister than that? I genuinely don't know; it is not clear. But in themselves, those sinister sentences have to be highlighted. Rarely have I read something so profoundly wrong at a moral

level.