

Italian Bloggers Under Fire: Who's Afraid of a Free Net?

From Italy (October 21, 2007)



The Italian "blogosphere" - a recent phenomenon in comparison to the U.S. and other countries - comes under attack from many sides. Politicians and professional journalists alike are scared that a free Net could mean the end of their life-long monopoly...

The famous Italian blog created by comedian Beppe Grillo warned the world against a law proposal that will be discussed at the Italian Parliament on Wednesday. It seems that, should the proposed law be approved by both houses of Parliament, all blogs and websites in the country would have to register, pay a national tax and work under the supervision of a professional journalist working as its executive editor. Such law requirements would simply destroy 99.9% of free blogs and information websites currently online.

As soon as the news became public (thanks to the blog www.civile.it [2]) Grillo's blog dubbed the



proposal as the latest move by the Prodi government to try to get rid of the rising popular opposition to his Government. Much of this opposition is indeed self-organized and web-based, with a number of free blogs – including the one operated by Mr. Grillo – opposing Mr. Prodi's political choices.

Yesterday, however, Communications Minister Paolo Gentiloni declared that all this fuzz is the result of an error in the phrasing of the proposed law, which according to Mr. Gentiloni "is not clear and leaves room to absurd interpretations".

So it seems now that it all was a big misunderstanding. The Italian Government is not trying to get rid of freedom of speech in the Internet after all. Only a bump in the road of technological progress.

On a more general plan, however, many commentators note that Italy's politics is ruled by two "castes", both of whom have very good reasons to fear bloggers and grass-roots journalism: on the one hand, the politicians, and on the other hand, the "professional journalists".

Everybody knows (and criticizes) the privileges of Italian politicians; but few know that Italian journalists are organized as an "order" (Ordine dei giornalisti) that is entitled by the State to decide - on the basis of annual written and oral examinations - who can work as a "professional" journalist, getting higher salaries, pension rights, and social prestige.

Mr. Grillo aside, Italian bloggers and citizen journalists are now raising their voices and the two castes are scared they might lose their life-long political monopoly over information...

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Links

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/blogpoly041192982788jpg>

[2] <http://www.civile.it/news/visual.php?num=45712>