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15 May 2018

Sir Vince Cable MP
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Dear Sir Cable

RE: Self-regulation of voter targeting by political parties

We are all concerned by the misuse of people's data by technology giants and data analytics companies. At Privacy International, we work across the world to expose and minimize the democratic impact of such practices.

Consequently, with the UK Data Protection Bill, we urged parliamentarians, through all the stages to delete the wide exemption, open to abuse, that allows political parties to process personal data 'revealing political opinions' for the purposes of their political activities.

To no avail – this provision stays in the Bill.

The recent revelations regarding misuse of our data by Cambridge Analytica, facilitated by Facebook has shown that our concerns are justified and the problem is systemic. Cambridge Analytica and Facebook are not alone.

The use of data analytics in the political arena needs to be strictly regulated. Personal data that might not have previously revealed political opinions can now be used to infer such opinions (primarily through profiling).

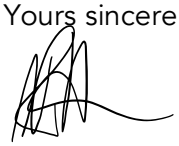
Failure to act can lead to political manipulation and risks undermining trust in the democratic process.

We believe that the Liberal Democrats share this concern. On several occasions, Ed Davey MP has stated publicly that the Cambridge Analytica revelations and subsequent allegations regarding its services to Leave campaigns, threaten the very foundations of our democracy. (https://bit.ly/2G5ZNVb)

In light of the above, now is a timely moment to show that your party's positions are more than just words. We would therefore propose that the Liberal Democrat Party takes a principled stand, by explicitly committing not to use the exemption provided in the Data Protection Bill to target voters - both online and offline - in all local and national forthcoming elections or by-elections.

We would be delighted to hear from you about whether you are prepared to make this commitment. We believe that this would send a strong message around the world about the defense of democracy from modern threats.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Gus Hosein
Executive Director
Privacy International

Cc: Sir Edward Davey MP