

There is a bit of a hoo-ha going on at the moment concerning dark forces harvesting and manipulating personal data for political and commercial purposes. But it would be a much bigger story if we discovered that no such manipulations were taking place. The clever and the cunning and the outright disreputable have always sought to mould and manipulate the general populous. It started some ten thousand years ago with the start of so-called human civilisation but probably kicked in many millennia earlier - way back into our hunter-gatherer past. In fact, wherever you find religion and high priests, you will find manipulation. And wherever you find economic elites, you will uncover underhandedness and outright deception.

No sooner had we humans opted for a settled farming existence some Del Boy types got control of the land and control of the oxen that ploughed the land. Everybody else became slowly but surely entrapped and enslaved. Class society and privilege was established, and religion was cleverly deployed as the cover. And astonishingly, nothing much has changed over the past ten thousand years.

The fact that much of the manipulation today takes place in the digital world should surprise no one. That is the medium of the day. Religion is still in the mix of course, as are fake national narratives. And in Britain, the Old Etonians and their cohorts, using the tried and tested ploys, are forever manoeuvring themselves into new positions of power by exploiting whatever medium is at their disposal. As the tabloids and terrestrial TV channels lose some of their influence so the elites turn to the internet and the social media platforms that they have spawned. The clever and the cunning waste no time in using and abusing these new media opportunities to shore up their class

dominance.

No doubt some new government regulations will come into effect in order to give the impression of accountability, privacy and fair-play, but the political elites will quickly employ new ways of circumnavigating those regulations. How ironic that at the very time that the British government feigns outrage at the latest digital abuse, they have quietly shelved the second stage of the Leveson enquiry an enquiry set up precisely to put a halt to media manipulation. No doubt a new national enquiry will be established and then equally quickly abandoned just as soon as the public outrage tires or moves on to something new. This is the British Establishment's way.

But if I sound just a little weary and overly cynical I should continually remind myself of the still revolutionary nature of the internet. Even though we must continually expect right-wing governments and their corporate backers to manipulate our on-line data for their own nefarious gain, we in turn must endeavour to use the internet to democratise our societies and hold power to account. It's a new form of class warfare admittedly, and both sides of the political divide are learning as they go along. But while the terrain of battle has changed, the essence of the battle

is the same as its always been the powerful, the greedy and the manipulative versus the rest.

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