



# Under The Radar

*A dive into the news  
you might have missed*



**TRAFALGAR** STRATEGY

# Justin Trudeau caught in third major ethics row

## *What happened?*

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologised for failing to recuse himself from a cabinet decision to award a \$912M (CAD) contract to the WE Charity, a group with long-established ties to Trudeau, Trudeau's family, and members of his Cabinet, including Finance Minister Bill Morneau.

Trudeau is a regular speaker at WE events and his wife Sophie is an ambassador for the group who also hosts a WE-sponsored podcast. Following the awarding of the bumper contract to administer the Canada Student Service Grant it was revealed the charity had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in speaking fees over the years to Trudeau's mother and brother.

Two Parliamentary committees and the Office of Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion have announced investigations into the matter. This will be Trudeau's third ethics investigation, with the prime minister having been found in contravention of the relevant acts during the two previous probes, one for his personal vacation on the Aga Khan's private Caribbean island and the other over his interference in a criminal justice probe into engineering firm SNC-Lavalin.

## *What does it mean?*

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. Fool me thrice? At this point the Liberals have no excuse: Trudeau's serial rule-breaking on ethics is a feature, not a bug. And it's a feature derived from Trudeau's tremendous personal privilege; the man doesn't appear to understand that the rules are meant for people like him too. It's the same attitude that pushed him to absolutism on the #MeToo movement whilst denying his own credible allegation of sexual harassment and gave him the confidence to speak out about racism despite dressing up in black or brownface on multiple occasions while he was a school teacher. In Trudeau's mind his good intentions outweigh any lapses in form, no matter how egregious (e.g. seeking to interfere in a criminal prosecution).

With the government riding high in the polls thanks to the extraordinary policy response to Covid-19 (i.e money, money, money) there is little prospect of a move against Trudeau. Cabinet memories are also long; the last time Cabinet ministers spoke out against Trudeau's ethical breaches they were dropped from their roles.

Perhaps worryingly for Trudeau, his Cabinet doesn't appear to want to support him either. And no wonder. As far as ethics violations go, the WE example is clear cut. Even worse, new bits and bobs keep appearing in the press. In other words, there is still a long way to go for this scandal. Liberals should be bracing for a very hard impact.

# Culture War on Eighth Avenue

## *What happened?*

Bari Weiss, an opinion editor from the New York Times (NYT), resigned citing internal bullying, racism and accused the paper's editors of publishing articles to satisfy a progressive narrative "rather than to allow a curious public to read about the world and then draw their own conclusions."

Weiss's resignation follows the publication of an open letter in Harpers Magazine in which Weiss and 150 prominent writers protested against intolerance in public discourse. Her resignation also follows the high profile departure of James Bennet, the NYT editorial page editor. He resigned in June following an internal backlash after publishing an article – from Republican Senator Tom Cotton - calling for federal troops to be deployed to "restore order" in the wake of the George Floyd protests.

## *What does it mean?*

Bari Weiss's departure from the New York Times raises questions about the acceptance of diverse opinions within news organisations. As Weiss herself said in her resignation letter "stories are chosen and told in a way to satisfy the narrowest of audiences..."

Debates that once existed solely on University campuses have found their way into the newsroom. As these students

migrated into the workplace so too have their ideas. It is these former students who argued Senator Tom Cotton, a democratically elected politician, should not have been given a platform by the New York Times. The same former students who demanded James Bennett step aside for allowing it in the paper and the same former students who labelled Bari Weiss a Nazi and racist because they disagreed with her views.

*"Allowing a full exchange of ideas is the best defence against bad ideas"*

In the digital age, when algorithms decide what news we read and headlines are driven not by facts, but compete for 'clicks', the print media is the last bastion presenting genuinely diverse opinions. It is the best alternative and the most straightforward cure to the digital echo chambers that exist online.

Unfortunately, it appears as if the New York Times has already started to police its content. If others follow, we are all losing something in a broader democratic sense. Allowing a full exchange of ideas is the best defence against bad ideas.

We should never forget that it was only after Nick Griffin, the former leader of the British National Party was humiliated on Question Time that his far-right party was crushed at the ballot box.

# Shop Workers of the World Unite

## *What happened?*

The Supreme Court has begun hearing an appeal brought by Asda, in what is set to be the final chapter of a 13-year long legal battle between the supermarket and its female employees. The company is seeking to overturn earlier court rulings, which found that the pay of their mainly female store workers can be directly compared with that of the better paid and mainly male depot staff.

Asda is arguing that the comparison cannot be made because they work in two “markedly different physical environments” that “demand different skill sets”. But three courts have already ruled in favour of the store workers, with all eyes now on the Supreme Court, who could award the claimants up to £20,000 each if successful. The judgement is expected in the autumn.

## *What does it mean?*

If the Supreme Court upholds the ruling, expect the floodgates to open with thousands of compensation claims that could amount to an £8bn bill for the retail sector. And this looks increasingly likely, given that Asda’s defense is based on the differing skill sets of two ultimately entry level jobs; nevermind the increased health risk for shopkeepers in the post-COVID world.

This also comes amidst the backdrop of an economic downturn that has hammered the high street; a ‘culture war’ that continues to shine a light on discrimination and inequality; and the shocking revelations regarding slave labour wages in sweatshop factories. So whichever way the decision goes, there will be considerable outrage from either big business or grassroots activists.

And it’s difficult to feel sorry for the likes of Asda, Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsbury’s, who have abused this practice while enjoying surging profits from panicked shoppers during lockdown. They can ultimately foot the extraordinary bill, and after championing their women as key workers to further their own public image, it’s only right that they should. That said, we should all expect our shopping bills to go up if they take the court loss.

For clothing retailers like Next and Matalan, however, who have been hit hard by lockdown restrictions, this could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back. Instead of being underpaid, workers at these stores could face not being paid at all.

Ultimately, this decision will do little to address deeper issues that exist in this line of work. Male depot workers and female shopkeepers will continue to experience low pay and insecure employment, while the rest of the high street workforce face up to a labour market at an all-time low for new vacancies.

# This Weeks Must Reads

Poland's huge challenge to repair rifts after election

[The Times](#)

“In some ways Poland's political landscape now resembles Britain's in the days after the 2016 EU referendum, with graduates pitted against non-graduates, the young against the old, and cities against small rural towns and villages.”

- Maria Wilczek & Oliver Moody on a divided Poland.

UK-China relations: from 'golden era' to the deep freeze

[Financial Times](#)

“Not only did the government raise higher hopes than most about the potential benefits of closer ties with China, but as it sets out to build its post-Brexit future, many think it is in a weaker position to spurn the fastest growing major economy in the world.”

- Jonathan Ford & Laura Hughes on the state of Sino-British relations.

'Now I Am Become Death':  
The Legacy of the First Nuclear Bomb Test

[The New York Times](#)

“Many of the scientists who witnessed the blast quickly realized the 'foul and awesome' power they had set free.”

- Maria Cramer on the 75th anniversary of the Trinity explosion, the world's first nuclear weapon test.

How Julian Lewis Pulled Off A Very British Coup To Chair  
The Intelligence And Security Committee

[HuffPost](#)

“Grayling was a picture of incredulity and puzzlement as he saw Julian Lewis' candidacy in black and white next to his, before the swift realisation kicked in that he had been outmanoeuvred.”

- Paul Waugh explains how Julian Lewis became the new Chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee.



**TRAFALGAR** STRATEGY

What we do

**CORPORATE  
COMMUNICATIONS**



**CAMPAIGNING**



**CRISIS  
MANAGEMENT**



**PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS**



**LITIGATION**



**DIGITAL**



**CHARITY**



For more information about Trafalgar Strategy  
and our services, get in touch:

Email:

[info@trafalgar-strategy.co.uk](mailto:info@trafalgar-strategy.co.uk)

Phone:

+44 (0)207 043 1308

Or visit:

[www.trafalgar-strategy.co.uk](http://www.trafalgar-strategy.co.uk)

Twitter:

[@trafalgarstrat](https://twitter.com/trafalgarstrat)