



Under The Radar

*A dive into the news
you might have missed*



TRAFALGAR STRATEGY

U.S. senate blanks on social media

What happened?

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg appeared before the US Senate Judiciary Committee to defend their companies' handling of the recent (and apparently ongoing) Presidential election. The two companies had received heavy criticism for their handling of a controversial New York Post story about the business dealings of the now President-elect's son, Hunter Biden.

The Biden story was re-litigated but Republican lawmakers used most of their time during the forum to complain loudly about anti-conservative bias on social media, while Democrats vented about the spread of misinformation being allowed by the two social giants as the President wages his campaign to overturn the results of the election.

What does it mean?

As usually happens when the wiz kids appear before a bunch of pension-age legislators, more heat was shed than light. Monsieurs Dorsey and Zuckerberg were merely props in the ongoing tussle over the election results.

Which is a pity when you consider the significant issues now facing the major social media platforms: Disinformation, hate speech, sexual and mental abuse; so much needs fixing. And yet, most legislators satisfied themselves with

bashing each other over the head. Plus ça change, plus c'est pareil.

The Republican claims of anti-conservative bias are ridiculous when you consider how thoroughly conservative voices dominate on platforms like Facebook. And if you don't believe that, I would invite you to check the @FacebooksTop10 Twitter account managed by the New York Times' tech columnist Kevin Roose.

"More heat was shed than light"

One point of agreement(ish) between the two sides was the need for change Section 230 of the 1996 telecommunications law, which provides the platforms certain legal protections over what their users post. Advocates for repealing Section 230 say it will force social media companies to take stronger action on controversial material. Those on the other side, however, worry about giving the already powerful social media platforms more control over speech.

In other words, welcome to the mess social media has made of our democracies. They've hollowed out the news business (which have all of the responsibilities stripping Section 230 would force on tech platforms), made us all angry partisans, and allowed misinformation to spread faster than a SpaceX powered Usain Bolt.

It's enough to make you one wish social media had never been born.

Thyme's Up For Wasting Food

What happened?

On Thursday, the *Financial Times* published a piece detailing the quiet growth of the zero-waste food movement - a philosophy which calls for restaurants to avoid using wasteful ingredients and to embrace closer relationships with committed producers.

What does it mean?

The movement not only seeks to prevent food waste by contracting composters to dispose of any waste, but goes further through the use of green energy suppliers and cooking appliances. Even the containers that are used to store food are reusable. Thus, it would seem, such a movement has the potential to completely reshape global restaurant supply chains as we know them and generate support from a range of different sectors.

At the start of this year, the magnitude of change such a movement required means it would have been laughed off by most. However, the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the restaurant industry, along with the undoubted cost-effectiveness of the movement, means this may no longer be the case.

Whilst there is still only a small number of restaurants that are currently striving for zero-waste with success, there is little doubt that the movement will start to gain even more traction in the aftermath of the Covid-19. The pandemic is certain to leave behind a lasting and extensive impact on the hospitality industry, while consumers will invariably reconsider aspects of their lives where they can commit to healthier and greener practices.

Coupled with Boris Johnson announcing his ten-point green plan this week, it also seems that the appetite for greener initiatives is one that could transcend party politics and provide a platform for bipartisan cooperation in a time of considerable political polarisation.

Whilst notions of healthy and sustainable eating have previously been considered to be the priorities of just a small minority, a survey by the US National Restaurant Association showed that about 50 percent of American consumers consider restaurants' eco-friendliness when deciding where to eat. For a country with an infamous love for fast food, this is no mean feat; it indicates that such a movement most definitely should be considered a global one.

The attention to detail and commitment required to fully realise the zero-waste vision is obviously immense. But luckily, successful chefs and restaurateurs could never really be accused of lacking in either department.

President No.3

What happened?

Peru's Congress has elected Francisco Sagasti as the interim president, becoming the third head of state in a week. Last Monday, Congress impeached and removed the popular Martin Vizcarra from power, triggering mass protests and violence on the streets, in what commentators called the worst political crisis in years. His successor, Manuel Merino, was forced to resign after the demonstrations turned even uglier when two protesters were killed by heavy-handed police officers trying to restore order.

What does it mean?

This week's crisis has been years in the making and has revealed the deep cracks within Peru's broken political system. The chaos began when Keiko Fujimori, leader of the Popular Force party, lost the 2016 Presidential Election, while her party won control of Congress. She vowed that the promises made in the party's manifesto would be turned into law, essentially trying to govern from within Congress, drawing the battle lines for a struggle between the executive and the legislature.

The next four years saw Congress blocking several of the government's policies as well as issuing motions to remove ministers, leading to an unsustainable gridlock. The political games culminated in the impeachment of Vizcarra on allegations of corruption,

which saw tensions reach boiling point. With violence on the street, it wasn't before the country had its fourth president in less than five years.

President Sagasti is a member of the only party in Peru's Congress who voted against the motion to oust Vizcarra, so his appointment has somewhat quelled the civil unrest. However, the elder politician from the centrist Purple Party faces a mightier task than just stabilising society.

"The people are tired of corruption"

Peru has one of the world's highest per capita death rates of COVID-19, with nearly 35,000 Peruvians dead. The Peruvian government's inability to bring the virus under control partly fuelled the decision to impeach Vizcarra. Sagasti must tackle the virus, or potentially suffer the same fate.

Then there's the broader challenge of governing a population who share a deep mistrust of their leaders and politicians. The people are tired of corruption, with both Presidential candidates from 2016 now steeped in allegations (Keiko Fujimori now resides in a cell accused of money laundering). And if this week has shown Sagasti anything, it's that the public is more than willing to take to the streets to express their disdain. The calm his presidency brings may be short-lived unless he restores confidence in the government, at least before the scheduled elections in April 2021.

This Weeks Must Reads

The President vs. the American Media [The New York Times](#)

“The president has some bones to pick with the American media: about our ‘bias,’ our obsession with racism, our views on terrorism, our reluctance to express solidarity, even for a moment, with his embattled republic”
- Ben Smith on President Emmanuel Macron’s issue with the English-language media.

UK gears up for coronavirus anti-vax battle [POLITICO](#)

“There are questions over whether the state — and online platforms themselves — have what it takes for the fight.”
- Emilio Casalicchio on the new anti-vax struggle.

Ethiopia crisis: 'a political mess that makes fathers fight sons' [Financial Times](#)

“With the eyes of the world focused on the US election, Ethiopian forces bombed arms depots and other targets in Tigray.”
- David Pilling and Andres Schipani on the the conflict in Ethiopia.

With Lord Dyson leading the Bashir inquiry, the BBC faces a reckoning [The Telegraph](#)

“The men behind Martin Bashir’s Panorama interview have been gloating about their methods for years. They may be regretting that now”
- Robin Aitken on the BBC’s investigation into the 1995 interview.



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