

Facebook ‘Whistleblower’ Blows Off the Real Scandal

Stop the presses: Facebook seeks to maximize profits.

Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee, appeared on “60 Minutes,” where she slammed Facebook, a publicly owned corporation, for “optimizing for content that gets engagement.” In other words, FB tries to keep users on its platform as long as possible to make money, something that a publicly held company has a fiduciary obligation to shareholders to do.

“Whistleblower” Haugen worked at Facebook headquarters in what the company called Civic Integrity, which, according to “60 Minutes,” deals with “risks to elections, including misinformation.” There she found that the content Facebook tailors for users seeks to trigger emotions, including anger, so that the user spends as much time as possible on the site.

Consider the following “bombshell” exchange:

“60 Minutes”: “The (Facebook) algorithm picks from those options based on the kind of content you’ve engaged with the most in the past.”

Haugen: “And one of the consequences of how Facebook is picking out that content today is it is optimizing for content that gets engagement, a reaction, but its own research is showing that content that is hateful, that is divisive, that is polarizing, it’s easier to inspire people to anger than it is to other emotions. ... Facebook has realized that if they change the algorithm to be safer, people will spend less time on the site, they’ll click on less ads, they’ll make less money.”

How is this different from any other medium, whether

television, cable television, radio, talk radio, newspapers, tabloids or other media? Recall the adage about newspapers: "If it bleeds it leads." As a talk radio host for nearly 30 years, I know that ratings evaluate not just how many people listen, but for how long they listen. It's a major part of the formula that determines the popularity of any given show. The more popular the show, the more advertisers it attracts. The more advertisers a show attracts, the more advertisers pay.

In short, Facebook finds that getting people riled up makes them spend more time getting riled up, the very method that "60 Minutes" pursues for ratings. Indeed, "60 Minutes" heavily promoted this supposed "bombshell" interview with the whistleblower.

The real scandal, not even hinted at by Haugen or "60 Minutes," is the obvious suppression of conservative content by Facebook, Twitter and the left-wing "news" media.

The treatment of former President Donald Trump stands out as the most blatant example. Days before the 2020 election, Twitter banned the *New York Post* from posting its own potentially election-changing exposé about Hunter Biden and that his father Joe, despite his denials, clearly knew about his son's involvement in the Ukraine energy company.

And Facebook banned Trump after the Jan. 6 "insurrection" for allegedly spreading the "Big Lie" about the 2020 election.

Never mind that Hillary Clinton repeatedly called the 2016 election "stolen" and Trump "illegitimate." Several people engaged in street violence in many cities when Trump got elected and more than 200 protesters were arrested when Trump was inaugurated. Two-thirds of Democrats, according to a March 2018 YouGov poll, falsely believe Russia "tampered with vote tallies" in the 2016 election.

True, according to a Quinnipiac University poll early this year, 76 percent of self-identified Republicans believe there

was “widespread fraud in the 2020 election.” But, according to a 2018 Gallup poll, 78 percent of Democrats believed Russians not only “interfered” in 2016, but “changed the outcome” of that election. So, more Democrats consider the 2016 election “stolen” than Republicans who feel likewise about 2020. Why hasn’t Facebook banned Clinton?

Bottom line, Haugen wants more, not less suppression of content that she considers “hateful” and “polarizing.” But who decides? Would that be the same people who call Jan. 6 an “insurrection” and who permanently banned Trump, but not Hillary Clinton, for promoting the Big Lie?

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