

# BBC'S ADAM CURTIS' FLUCK UP

Every once in a while there's an opinion piece so grossly naive, horribly uninformed, or passively apologetic that it deserves pushback.

BBC's Adam Curtis' blog post, WHAT THE FLUCK [sic], is such a piece. Read it for yourself. I'm still scratching my head about this overlong, winding post that ultimately says,

“...Maybe today we are being farmed by the new system of power. But we can't see quite how it is happening – and we need a new journalism to explain what is really going on. ...”

No. We have the right journalism, even if it is not perfect or dispersed evenly, even if we could use more of it. The Guardian's work on the Snowden story is just one example; if I may say so, Emptywheel sets another fine example as citizen journalism.

What we need is a public willing to invest time and energy in reading the material reported, discuss it openly after careful analysis, willing to demand and support more good journalism by way of subscription, donation, or advertising revenues as a last resort.

What we don't need are naive or uninformed opinion leaders who tell us we don't have journalism reporting about the size, scale, and nature of the corruption we face.

What we don't need are apologias masquerading as demands for more and better journalism.

Curtis' piece in particular does several things to muddy the public's perception about journalism today:

- He throws us a narrative about poor little rich girl Tamara Yeardy Mellon and her

father that is not unlike reading about poor little Paris Hilton, or poor little Kardashian Annoying-Sister-Of-The-Day. The narrative utterly misses a critical point, derailing its own effort, yet he feels the public need more backstory narrative in order to really understand today's challenges..

- Rupert Murdoch is treated as if he was handed a bag of flaming dog poo by his editorial predecessor, dealing with the mess in the best manner he could – as if cellphone hacking by Murdoch's employees was mere fallout inherited immaculately by Murdoch.
- Curtis ignores his own role, using his bully pulpit to complain about an absence of reporting he is capable of providing instead of this meandering whinge.

With regard to Tamara Mellon's allegedly lost control over of her luxe shoe business Jimmy Choo Limited to Phoenix Private Equity, Curtis failed to note that not even a Mellon family member is safe from predation. *Even a Mellon can be made into a corporate vulture's bitch.*

What does this tell us about the nature of the beast?

- The One Percent as we used to know them are no more; something more powerful is at work, eating the lunch of the past's oligarchs. We know this, though; we still haven't seen any frogmarched executives after the economic crisis of 2008.
- Whatever the beast is, it's hidden from the reading public's view, and folks like Curtis don't follow up in spite of their resources. Why didn't he ask who or what Phoenix Private Equity is?
- Why does Curtis blindly accept Tamara Mellon's perspective? She's an unreliable narrator as Matthew Mellon's wife. He never appears to question the possibility that the

couple were both set up, or were agents for GCHQ.

What does the Tamara Mellon story tell us about the real problem?

Curtis demonstrates the true barrier to understanding the truth: an inability to be sufficiently curious, a lack of critical thinking, or a tendency to sweep important details under the rug for reasons that are not clear. The thread is right there in front of him; he fails to grab it and follow it, asking instead for someone else to do it, *in spite of the fact Curtis has a bloody blog hosted at the BBC's website.*

With regard to Rupert Murdoch, the pass Curtis offers the news magnate is ridiculous. Murdoch is characterized as having ethical limits demonstrated in his firing of News of the World senior editor Stafford Somerfield. Curtis credulously accepts Murdoch's excuse:

"I sacked the best editor of the News of the World. He was too nasty even for me."

Right; the same guy who made News of the World a profitable, expanding outlet is sacked a year after the paper's acquisition for doing what made the newspaper successful. What would you do in Murdoch's shoes to a cash cow who might usurp your internal power structure given said cash cow's 25 years seniority in the business?

Murdoch is the same man who, as chair and CEO of News Corporation, owned over 800 companies located globally, constituting a news empire worth more than \$5 billion as of 2000. This fortune was made by continuing the nasty tabloid approach Stafford Somerfield began at News of the World, spread now around the world.

This is the same Murdoch who built Fox News, which could not do enough panty-sniffing when it came to President Bill Clinton's intern scandal in the 1990s. The same Fox News that set the

agenda for the Bush-Cheney White House through daily talking points sent the president's offices, utterly complicit with and not separate from the halls of political power.

And of course, the cellphone hacking scandal. That's all on Murdoch and his organization, nearly 40 years after Somerfield was sacked.

What Curtis' post reveals is not a lack of "new journalism" necessary to improve the public's understanding.

Curtis' threadbare grasp of journalistic ethics is instead disclosed. This cannot be fixed by building a new approach to reporting. It can only be fixed by pointing out the failure to apply an ethical standard uniformly to contemporary journalism as well as noting culpability in the lapse of understanding (ex. Why does Curtis let Murdoch off the hook, in spite of his blog's perch at BBC?).

If there's anything else missing it is Curtis' self-empowerment to be the necessary change using the tools he has within his grasp. There's only one person who can supply that.