

To Understand Facebook Today, Read Its Earliest Critics | OneZero

By Joanne McNeil

October 23, 2020

Hardly a week goes by without another Facebook scandal. Frustration with Facebook and criticism of it — even despair over it and outright hatred of it — seems constant, evergreen. It's been this way since at least the 2016 election. There are now more journalists investigating the world's largest social network than ever before, exposing issues like the nightmarish working conditions of its content moderators, the company's struggle to limit the spread of dubious or dangerous content — like the New York Post's questionable story about Hunter Biden's laptop — Mark Zuckerberg's dalliances with the Trump administration, and the congregation of hate groups on the platform.

The recent explosion of Facebook news might give the impression that things at the company only recently went sour. Zuckerberg himself has helped shape this media narrative. "You know, for the first 10 years of the company or so, we got more glowing press than I think any company deserves. And it wasn't just Facebook; it was the whole tech industry," he told his staff in a company meeting in the fall of 2019, the audio of which was leaked to The Verge. He made similar comments in a 2018 interview with Kara Swisher, asserting that everyone — not just the press — used to love the company: "For the last 10 or 15 years, we have gotten mostly glowing and adoring attention from people, and if people wanna focus on some real issues for a couple of years, I'm fine with it," he said.

Even Facebook's toughest critics often echo Zuckerberg's claims. "In 2016, we didn't know. We were innocent. We still believed social media connected us and that connections were good. That technology equalled progress," begins a recent op-ed in The Guardian by Carole Cadwalladr, a founding member of the Real Facebook Oversight Board and an investigative journalist who was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for her investigation of the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Zuckerberg has every incentive to convince people that Facebook was once

“glowingly” received. If the company had been a universally celebrated project several years ago, it would mean that simple reforms and regulations could rein it in — that with just the right policy, the social network could return to the benevolent path it once tread on.

But the truth is Facebook has always been a problem. There is no good Facebook that Facebook can return to being.

[...]

Source: [To Understand Facebook Today, Read Its Earliest Critics | by Joanne McNeil | Oct, 2020 | OneZero](#)