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Facebook generation [1]

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The next generation of politicians will be the Facebook generation. With the proliferation of social networking, the huge numbers of embarrassing photos and a culture that encourages ?status updates? whether through websites or twitter-like social media, attitudes to life, privacy and transparency are likely to become more liberal.

It used to be that all politicians had an unknown past. Once they approached power, the embarrassing photos would emerge, school friends and university acquaintances would be interviewed and we would all judge. Remember the party leader interviews, or even the channel 4 docu-drama on Cameron and Boris Johnson?

In future, however, there will be too much to trawl through. The norm is that everyone bares their life to their friends, acquaintances, and occasionally everyone. Whilst the privacy is controllable and photos may be untagged, the fact remains that they?re still there and are likely to emerge at some stage into the public gaze.

This is a positive thing ? it means that in future politicians may be more liberal when it comes to life-styles, marking a transition from the current hypocrisy of secretly imperfect legislators trying to perfect those around them, to a transparent, unembarrassed and open class of imperfect politicians allowing everyone else to continue their lives.

The current trend is often said to be towards increasingly bland and identical politicians, too scared to step out of line or flaunt their eccentricities within an environment of twenty-four hour news that journalists struggle to fill. However, this will not be the case for future politicians, for whom the norm will have been complete openness, almost bordering on a celebration of embarrassment from the outset. The public and future journalists will be more forgiving as most will have been exposed for equally embarrassing things.

As well as shattering the current hypocrisy of the ruling classes, the policy implications of this may be in favour of the decriminalisation of illegal drugs, more liberal attitudes to freedom of speech, to smoking, unhealthy habits, and transparency. If we continue like this, we can expect interesting people doing liberal things. I can?t wait.

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