



**Good day to you.** It's been 8 years since we launched **We The People on 4CRB** and in that time we've covered many stories, presented facts and offered opinion. It's been a grand journey and I have met the most extraordinary people along the way. A fellow traveller of special importance to me is Deborah Kelly who is a stalwart for justice and democracy. Here now are her words and wisdom.....quote... *These days we commonly hear people born after about 1970 lamenting the inordinate amount of time their children and grandchildren spend with their faces stuck to computer screens, iPads and so-called smart phones. You can hardly walk down the street today without crashing into someone whose face is glued to their phone. In a world that was properly spinning on its axis, you might think it's all harmless enough and that the only real problem is that kids should get outside into the sunshine more often or that they might be exposed to some on-line bullying or other bad behaviour which, once identified, can be blocked and avoided in the future. You might even think that idling a bit of time away swapping photos and posting on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is merely an innocuous pastime, hopefully one they will grow out of in time.*

**But oils ain't oils, Sol, as the saying goes....** It cannot be doubted that the internet has delivered enormous benefits to humankind. It's a wonderful invention. Further, as the cost of technology continues to fall, it is enabling billions of people in developing nations to connect to rest of the world, providing opportunities for better education, health, social and economic outcomes. But the brave new world of social media is far more sinister than one might imagine. It is not merely a benign influence for social good, as the Mark Zuckerbergs and co. so loudly and loftily proclaim. In contrast to their motherhood statement motto "**our mission is to make the world more connected**" Facebook's programming algorithms actually make the world more divided. They are consciously designed to promote content that is controversial, aggressive and rude because this somehow appeals to a primal part of our brains and keeps us more engaged. If you doubt that our brains are wired that way, just think of the top rating TV show "Funniest Home Videos" where the entertainment is watching mainly small children and animals having accidents and hurting themselves, to uproarious canned laughter. The pernicious and pervasive so called "social" media – **anti-social, I call it** – taps into that rich vein. It is destroying civility and turning people against each other, bringing out the ugliest parts of the human psyche. In this sphere, love and common sense have now left the building, along with Elvis. **Knowingly**, in order to keep as many users on their platforms for as long as possible, these billionaire tech-barons have created algorithms that appeal to the basest and most primal instincts and fears that people have, fostering less understanding and human connection and more spite, hate and divisiveness. They shape public opinion through manipulation and selective information feeds. Facts are irrelevant. Fake news and lies abound. The more sensational, vitriolic and meaner, the better.

Despite knowing that this is destructive and corrosive to social cohesion and after seeing the evidence from their own internal analysis, according to a report in the Wall Street Journal last week, Facebook shelved reform ideas to simply maintain its power and profitability. These companies are cancers. The real problem is, **all this is happening under the radar**, so many people don't realise the manipulative effect that **anti-social** media has on them. They see these "free" content platforms and apps like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as a gift from the gods. But as we all know, there are no free lunches. There is an old saying in Silicon Valley, **if you're not paying for the product, then you are the product**. And the billionaire tech-barons will do anything to keep you online to grow their product. Why more people are not outraged by this, I do not know. Too dumb, I suppose, or too wrapped up in their own narcissistic showing off online, posting every tedious detail of their ordinary lives and feeling like that makes them special. That is very sad, but it doesn't justify their exploitation and manipulation by Facebook and others.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley with special thanks to Deborah Kelly**