



80 years ago, when the only source of news in NZ was the daily paper, my dad would open the Taranaki Daily News and don his specs and after a short interval would take his specs off and declare to no-one in particular (unless you count a small boy known in the family as J.J), “The World’s In A Mess” and with a sigh of regret mixed with mild exasperation, would fold the paper, and go outside to dig the spuds for dinner.

In the ensuing decades, our news sources have become ever more numerous, until today, there are so many, that real news (if you like to define it as a story which is new) is quite rare.

The Internet delivers Social Media, which has undoubtedly, at its best, greatly expanded our ability to interact with others, share experiences and generally to make us feel part of a community. They are an invaluable tool for getting and receiving important messages. As a vehicle for News, however, they are another matter. The likes of Google, Meta, X and the rest, don’t actually seem to deal in news per se at all, they are really rather



vehicles for advertising with a soupçon of news slipped in to liven the pot and they generally take the raw news (They don’t always pay for it either) from reputable news-gatherers and proceed to “sex it up” which what you can do online, what you can do if you walk into a crowded room in real time and yell “Sex”. A genuine news story is one which is faithful to the facts, is not one worked over to make it sound more interesting while simultaneously functioning principally as an advertising mule.



Typically then, we are helpless online victims of this Faux News, being pestered ceaselessly by platforms with dodgy-sounding names, which labour hourly to convince us that we should stop our lives, and to instead revel in the daily stream of consciousness of a current US president, who has recently lost a lot of weight and has the on-screen appearance of a decrepit bloodhound.

Naturally, newsrooms in this country, are going to be tempted to climb on board this crazy spectacle. One News At 6 o’Clock enters our living rooms every evening with pretentious and pompous opening music suggesting that what will follow will be like the latest Mission Impossible movie, involving endless scenes of Tom Cruise with his pants on fire. Recently Simon Dallow introduced a nearly 3 minute story of the life and loves of someone called Sly Stone (whom most people in NZ would never have heard of). Oh how I miss the staid boring community newspaper which got kicked down the road some time back but which was at least About Us, not something which happened a world away. Similarly my eyes and ears ache for Aunty RNZ, just because it presents as news, just the facts, not a puff-piece which in substance is like something packaged up at Maccas.



Real News is done FOR us. Social media news is done TO us. Its possible that if the next election is fought by a new party whose only policy is to rid us of chatbots and faux news, co-pilots and AI, they should win in a walk.

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