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If you're on the side of democracy, Nick Clegg, why are you going to work for Facebook?

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When you take the Zuckerberg shilling, you're leaving your principles behind you

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Dear Nick, congratulations on the new job. Finally, some real power. Deputy prime minister is so last century. You're now vice-president of global affairs and communications at Facebook, a company that, as Mark Zuckerberg points out, is less a traditional firm than a full-blown nation state. And not just any nation state - the most powerful nation state on Earth, ever, home to 2 billion people and with nothing as inconvenient as elections to get in the way of "progress". Suck up to the supreme leader and you're set. Think of it as something like the coalition, only set in Pyongyang in 2022.

And you're relocating to the real centre of global politics - Silicon Valley. So double cause for congratulations. You won't be around to enjoy the after-effects of Britain's historic Brexit vote.

You married a Spaniard, worked in Brussels, describe yourself as a passionate European, propped up David Cameron's coalition for just long enough for him to call a referendum and announced your new job on the eve of the People's Vote march that you campaigned for. Here's hoping you're not going to take the pay cheque and keep your mouth shut, Nick.

Can I call you Nick? I disapprove of Mark this and Sheryl that (there in your public statement) - they're Zuckerberg and Sandberg to me. Part of the reason for the mess we are in is this cosy over-familiarity with distant power figures, but you were one of us, Nick. That was your job, to represent us and if you're going over to the other side - and yes, it is the other side - I'd like you to remember that. Because the rest of us can't just walk away leaving Jacob Rees-Mogg the keys.

Because what you don't seem to have grasped is that the crisis gripping Britain and the one gripping Facebook are one and the same. They're manifestations of each other. It isn't technology that has blown apart our world - it's Facebook's business model. It's the monetisation of fear and hatred and lies. And what we're witnessing here in Britain is a compromised government colluding with a compromised technology platform to cover up the truth of what happened in the EU referendum.

We know Facebook that was the key to the vote. That almost all the money spent was funnelled through the platform. That spending limits were exceeded. That electoral laws were broken. That campaigns were illegally co-ordinated. That Russia targeted us. And that Facebook facilitated all this. Your company is refusing to hand over evidence, according to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport select committee. And Zuckerberg has refused - three times - to testify to parliament.

Which is where you come in. I don't know why Zuckerberg hired you - oh no, wait. Yes I do. You've hobnobbed with every European commissioner of note and last September you wrote an op-ed, headlined "In defence of Facebook and the Silicon Valley giants". Nick, that piece was poor. In it, you suggest journalists like me are "disingenuous" because Facebook has destroyed the business model of traditional publishing. And that we "need to avoid a kneejerk condemnation of the disruption and potency of new technologies and embrace the idea that technology can improve our lives".



Mark Zuckerberg has refused three times to testify to parliament.
Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

If you want to use the comment pages of a paper whose business model has been threatened by Silicon Valley to pitch for work there, you may want to call it what it is. You've taken the money. That's your call, though I refer you to John Grisham's 1991 novel, *The Firm*. Remember the young protagonist and that job that was too good to be true? "When Mitch McDeere qualified third in his class at Harvard, offers poured in from every law firm in America," ran the blurb. "Bendini, Lambert and Locke were a small, well-respected firm, but their offer exceeded Mitch's wildest expectations: a fantastic salary, a new home and the keys to a brand new BMW."

Though not even Bendini, Lambert and Locke faced the sort of accusation Facebook did last week - that genocide was incited on the site. The *New York Times* published evidence that the Myanmar military had deliberately provoked violence against the Rohingya by flooding the platform with fake posts about fake atrocities. Kneejerk condemnation, Nick? Or a failure on your part to acknowledgelet alone understand the ways your new company is undermining democracy worldwide. See the reports from Brazil of how WhatsApp has been flooded with disinformation before its election.

Or consider the ramifications of the situation in which the select committee published more evidence that your company has, even now, been hosting ads from a shadowy unknown outfit - "Mainstream Network" - pushing a hard Brexit to north of 10 million people. We have no idea who is paying for this.

That's the same day that you wrote in the *Guardian*: "Instead of the impact of Brexit, I will now be focused on the impact of tech." Nice try. But they are intimately entwined. And this must be the number one priority on your desk . It's the parliament that you served in that is asking these questions, attempting to bring to light the dark money and dark forces that we know were at work. Facebook's deliberate obfuscation is helping the government to avoid hard questions about the legitimacy of the vote, its own ministers' role in the biggest electoral fraud of modern times and the question it has been desperate to avoid of Russia's role.

You cannot collude in this. You are better than that, Nick. You've been hired to say Euro-friendly things to European commissioners who wish to rein in Facebook. But guess what? You're a Brit, still. You were elected to serve us. And as deputy prime minister, you had the highest level of security clearance. You had access to the Five Eyes intelligence alliance during the crucial years 2010-2015, when we know, via special prosecutor Robert Mueller, that the Russian government sought to subvert and infiltrate America's tech platforms.

The FBI targeted Mitch McDeere. Do you remember? The same government agency that's currently circling Facebook. Why has the company hired you, Nick? Where do your loyalties lie? And what are you going to do? Are you really going to collude in a cover-up? Or did your promise to the voters of Sheffield Hallam mean anything at all?

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