Facebook is a highly profitable way of garnering information from individuals and then selling it on to advertisers and other companies who can then target individuals. It is a highly effective way of gathering such information, far better than the methods used by PR consultants for many years.

What the Cambridge Analytica uproar is about is that that outfit got hold of the profiles of 50 million Facebook users via a psychology professor and then used the information in various political campaigns like the Trump election and Brexit.

This is hardly new information but papers like the Guardian have used the so called scandal to mount attacks on social media. They do this partly due to their liberal outrage over a perceived attack on the liberal wing of capitalist democracy, but also because they regard social media as a threat to their circulation.

But in this society politicians and the rich have always used the media, whether it be “traditional” media, radio, television, the press, or new media like Google and Facebook, to distort and disinform,
withhold information, tell outright lies and conduct bigoted cam-
paigns against those it sees as threats.

It is the height of hypocrisy for the newspaper media to cry “ma-
ipulation” when they themselves have been involved in the ma-
ipulation of ideas and information for very many years! As for
the press in general, who can forget the Sun’s lies about Hillsbor-
ough? Why else do 51% of people in Britain distrust the media, the
highest percentage in Europe?

There has been no uproar when other market research compa-
nies use information gathered from the Internet to apply targeted
advertising. That’s business as usual as far as the press is concerned.
It’s also okay to spend vast amounts at elections, as the Tories did at
the last election, spending £18.6 million, which included £2 million
to Facebook.

The rich own the media in all its forms. They use it to maintain
themselves in power. The nasty manipulation by Cambridge Ana-
lytica is nothing new. Only the fact that it is done via the Internet
makes it any different.