

Snow storm political reporting

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Snow Queen?

The failed challenge by Hoon/Hewitt to Gordon Brown's leadership is perhaps the first serious political coup that has ever been played out *within* a normal day's news cycle. Thanks to texting, 24 hour news and the blogs this story was begun and ended between one conventional newspaper deadline and the next. This morning we wake up to headlines about something that was over by yesterday's Newsnight. Truly, a political media snow squall rather than a big freeze.

The [timeline](#) actually stretches back to blogger Guido Fawkes giving [a strong hint](#) that something was afoot on Tuesday night. But the following lunchtime, while the BBC's Political Editor was [rubbishing that rumour](#), the actual story broke as the plotters emailed and texted fellow MPs.

What followed was a feeding frenzy by the 24 hour TV news channels but also by the online editions of the newspapers. Most set up [rolling commentaries](#) including the Guardian's Andrew Sparrow, who as far as I can judge, was the [first to have the story](#). [Although there are [other candidates](#) for that honour] And then, of course, there was [Twitter](#) and the various blogs and political websites.

It was interesting, for example, to see how well [LabourList](#) has recovered both credibility and relevance with this story. I suspect it will be at least as important as ConservativeHome in understanding Party mood and machinations in the future.

Of course, the critical factor in this story as it broke was how quickly Brown's supporters would react and most importantly, how the potentially rebellious ministers would react. The world waited for the texts from the Milibands and the rest.

During the afternoon, political correspondents were measuring loyalty to Brown by how long it took politicians to feed the 24 hour news beast. By the time Peter Mandelson gave his vastly assured performance on [Newsnight](#), the plot was dead and the story was, in effect, played out.

Of course, politically it is a (short-term) disaster for Labour and the ramifications will continue but in media terms it was fascinating to see something forced to a conclusion so rapidly.

Back in the mid-90s as Euro-sceptic Tories continually plotted to bring down John Major I worked for a weekly politics programme. Despite the cliff-edge febrile atmosphere of the time, both MPs and journalists still thought in terms of days and weeks rather than hours as they hatched their plots and spun their wicked webs. No more.

Between the blogger at his keyboard and Adam Boulton standing outside Number 10 there is little time to react or reflect. Modern politics is now played out live online and onscreen. It is certainly much more exciting. But perhaps it might even encourage people to be a bit more open in the first place?

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