

Where were the bloggers?

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/11/30/where-were-the-bloggers/

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The farce-cum-scandal over proxy donors to Labour has been a story driven by mainstream media. It was the [Mail On Sunday](#) that broke it on November 24th. So where were the bloggers?

I give a lecture at LSE where I bang on about how US bloggers may have made the difference in some crucial seats at the mid-term elections two years ago. I also cite various examples of how British political bloggers have helped move stories in this country. But this latest funding scandal has emerged as much through Labour leaks to mainstream journalists as it has through bloggers digging away behind the professional hacks' backs.

'[Guido Fawkes](#)' aka Paul Staines has added some minor but interesting [detail](#) but he spends most of his time with a glass of fine wine in front of *Newsnight*. I am not trying to re-open that false competition between bloggers and mainstream media. Most bloggers say they are in it for comment not revelation. And you could just as easily ask where were those doughty mainstream investigative journalists when all this has been going on for months? Was no-one looking in to Labour finance after the cash for peerages trail went cold? But it is interesting to observe that bloggers are still very much in an active but secondary role.

As Guido points out in his [comment](#) on this post his traffic is up, which says something about the demand for an alternative view on these kind of affairs. That's something I welcome, although [others](#) fear it adds more speculation and innuendo.

Labour bloggers like [Tom Watson](#) are ignoring the tale, while Tory stalwarts like [Iain Dale](#) have gone into party political mode and have nothing particularly fresh to add apart from understandable glee. Blogs like [Dizzy](#) are good at giving commentary on the machinations. He reports a Harman aide in a restaurant with a [Standard](#) journalist the evening before that newspaper prints a [story](#) blaming Brown's team for Harriet's predicament.

None of the pol blogs are debating just how this undermines all attempts to clean up British politics. We are in a cleft stick (or some similarly cliched place). If we keep making it harder for the politicians to get donations from private individuals then we will end up paying for the parties through taxation. But the debate is not really happening online yet.

No doubt the contrarian libertarians at [Spiked](#) will come out with a piece soon on why corruption is perfectly alright and any objections you might have just show how bourgeois you are. Meanwhile, the excellent [Mick Fealty](#) rightly describes what is happening as another sign of the emergence of a networked political journalism in the UK.

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