

# Polis – Losing face(book)

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 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/06/11/losing-facebook/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/06/11/losing-facebook/)

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The real contest for the Deputy Leadership of the UK Labour Party is, of course, to see which candidate has got most friends on the social networking website [Facebook](#). Some people have [questioned](#) the use of Facebook as a progressive political tool, pointing out that the racist National Front also uses it. But the real question is why the array of middle-aged politicians currently competing to be Gordon Brown's assistant think it will help their campaigns. If you search Hilary Benn you

will find he has restricted access so you can't check how many friends he has, unless you sign up. But if you look at some of the people who have signed up to the more open campaign pages for the candidates, you wonder if the supporters will really attract more votes. This is because people become friends with anything and anybody on Facebook simply to boost the numbers of 'friends' they have. It is completely lacking in the natural social discrimination you practice in the real world. I also doubt any of the Deputy contenders use Facebook for what it was intended – a funny, meaning-free way of keeping in touch with your college mates, inviting them out to bar-b-qs or putting your engagement party photos online.

It doesn't really matter, but it is a classic example of how politicians still fail to understand how the internet works.

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