

When coffee shops are in the news so is dissent

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I'm grateful to Tom Pride for pulling together a chain of thoughts this morning. [He suggested on his blog](#) that the government is trying to suppress discussion on Twitter (which via Tory friendly libel lawyers I suspect it is) and that there is a precedent for this, in 1675. The [Coffee Sage web site](#) provides the text:

"A PROCLAMATION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF COFFEE HOUSES"

Whereas it is most apparent that the multitude of Coffee Houses of late years set up and kept within this Kingdom...and the great resort of idle and disaffected persons to them, have produced very evil and dangerous effects; as well for that many tradesmen and others, do herein misspend much of their time, which might and probably would be employed in and about their Lawful Calling and Affairs; but also for that in such houses...divers, false, malicious, and scandalous reports are devised and spread abroad to the Defamation of His Majesty's Government, and to the disturbance of the Peace and Quiet of the Realm; his Majesty hath though it fit and necessary, that the said Coffee Houses be (for the Future) put down and suppressed..."

King Charles II of England, December 23, 1675
This rule was revoked on January 8, due to widespread citizen protest.

Put this in context: the Guardian reported recently that coffee shops are booming. So too is Twitter.

Is that a coincidence, or sign of disaffection? And is Starbucks' response to its tax avoidance being revealed indication that it really does appreciate the power of that disaffection?

I'm not sure, of course. But I find it vaguely optimistic that the power of conversation - face to face over coffee and online via Twitter, remains so powerful, and such a cause of alarm to those with reason to be worried.