

JIM & DAN'S EXON ADVENTURE

Cyber Disobedience

THE ONLINE NEWSPAPER that usually keeps me up all night drags me into daylight, too, now that I'm starting to communicate with human and Net resources around the country in order to organize a challenge to the Exon Act, if it is passed, by publishing an obscene description of the 86 U.S. senators who voted for it. We plan to be the test case that goes all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, and not from a federal penitentiary.

The American Reporter, the first daily newspaper on the Net, grew out of a discussion on the Society of Professional Journalists General Journalism Discussion List thread titled "Goodbye Milwaukee Journal..." As the thread revealed, there is a lot of general sadness abroad in the American (print) newspaper industry as papers disappear every week and more reporters are thrown into the streets.

Our answer to the malaise was to start our own newspaper, owned exclusively by reporters who write it every day. And that's what we are: a slowly growing, very independent Net daily newspaper that was sailing quite happily along at a merry pace until U.S. Sen. James Exon crapped on the First Amendment.

We decided to challenge Exon's "Decency In Communications Act" in the most direct possible

way. We hate child porn as much as they do—or more—but we love the liberty our fathers won for us more than we can hate anything at all.

We posted our editorial, "We Vow To Challenge The Exon Act," to a number of good mailing lists on the Internet. Journalists and others picked the posts up and reposted to Usenet news groups. The Usenet and mailing list posts brought offers from a very brave judge in Texas, Steven Russell, who has just begun teaching constitutional law there, and who has told me that he will write the article if he believes it will help the First Amendment as the test case—despite misgivings about his own future as a judge and college professor in a country that has no fondness for pornography.

We've published an editorial, signed up a writer (a judge, no less!) and a law firm (we hope), all on the Internet, all in a couple of days. We're happening faster than fuzz on a fudgestick, out here in cyberspace.

Hopefully, by the time Sen. Exon and his jaded entourage get to the White House, he'll find one of us there to bar the door.

JOE SHEA

Joe Shea is editor-in-chief of The American Reporter (joeshea@netcom.com and http://www.newshare.com/Reporter/today.html).

all about, how it works and why it is different from broadcasting or cable TV." The legislation, he says, is just another wet idea of the "right-wing wave" that is cresting in Washington right now, epitomized by the debate's opening prayer.

Feingold and his small band of

Decency Act opponents argue that creating a new prosecutorial tool aimed primarily at the Internet is unnecessary and would damage the U.S. computer industry. "Inexpensive software is already available," he notes, that can protect individual Internet users and their children from

viewing material they might find offensive.

The deliberately freewheeling nature of the Internet, Feingold said in a fruitless attempt to educate his fellow senators, makes it impossible to determine the age of electronic correspondents without drastically undermining the basic design of the Internet's open architecture. If the restrictions passed by the Senate become law, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont) warned, the open systems approach that led to the astonishing growth of the Internet could become a thing of the past, replaced by a new federal digital police force that checks all e-mail at the door.

The government should be careful "that we do not destroy what has been one of the most remarkable technological advances, certainly in my lifetime—the Internet," Leahy offered during the debate. "It has grown as well as it has, as remarkably as it has, primarily because it has not had a whole lot of people restricting it, regulating it, touching it, and saying do not do that, or do not do this or the other thing. Can you imagine," the out-voted senator asked, "if it had been set up as a government entity and we all voted on these [content] regulations for it? We would probably be able to correspond electronically with our next-door neighbor, if we ran a wire back and forth, and that would be it," he suggested.

The issue is critically important to Silicon Valley, where the booming computer networking industry accounts for thousands of the new jobs created locally in the last several years. According to *Inter-*

FUTURE WITHOUT THE SHOCK

The Brave New Internet

A patrolled highway will feature different scenery

SAY GOODBYE to the good old days.

An arrogant House will easily pass the Senate-approved Communications Decency Act, and the president, with nothing to lose on the left and everything to gain on the right, will not worry much about what gets flushed along with the digital miscreants.

It's not going to work. Prohibition didn't stop the consumption of alcohol, and here we're dealing with sexual lust, the 600-pound gorilla of human vices. Sure, Prodigy and America Online (AOL) will turn off a few newsgroups and ban a few users, but the perverts and hackers (and worse yet, the perverted hackers) will be a step ahead, as always.

Expect warnings and age verifications. Many providers will turn off the alt.pictures.binaries.* groups, but if you're even mildly determined there will be plenty of FTP and telnet sites. (After all, we're talking here about the greatest distribution mechanism in the history of the planet.) Threats won't stop traffic too great to be monitored in even a rudimentary way, and electronic warnings, the virtual equivalent of Tipper Gore's little album stickers, will mainly announce where the 13-year-olds should start first.

And so, they are probably going to get serious. Because they can.

First, they'll moderate all the newsgroups and listservers. Thank the moderators for a thankless job with a modest salary from funds provided through a new Internet User Tax. AOL will pass it to its users, universities to its students and businesses to its customers. It'll only be 65 cents a month or so, and what's the big deal?

Expect regulation of Internet Providers under the Electronic Communications Commission (ECC) requiring registration and regulation for the privilege of connecting to the Net. Then, there will be engineering changes to ensure compliance, through modifications in the software fabric itself, the transport protocols used to exchange data packets.

The Old Guard will protest, until funds are threatened. Everyone plays ball in this country, eventually.

So you're a Provider and you want to forward one of your user's messages to the new and improved National Information Infrastructure? Additions to the SETUP message will authenticate that you're preapproved and on the up-and-up, and have agreed to be responsible for the content of your user's messages. Which, of course, you'll have incentive to watch carefully. Maybe even blacklist—centrally, if need be.

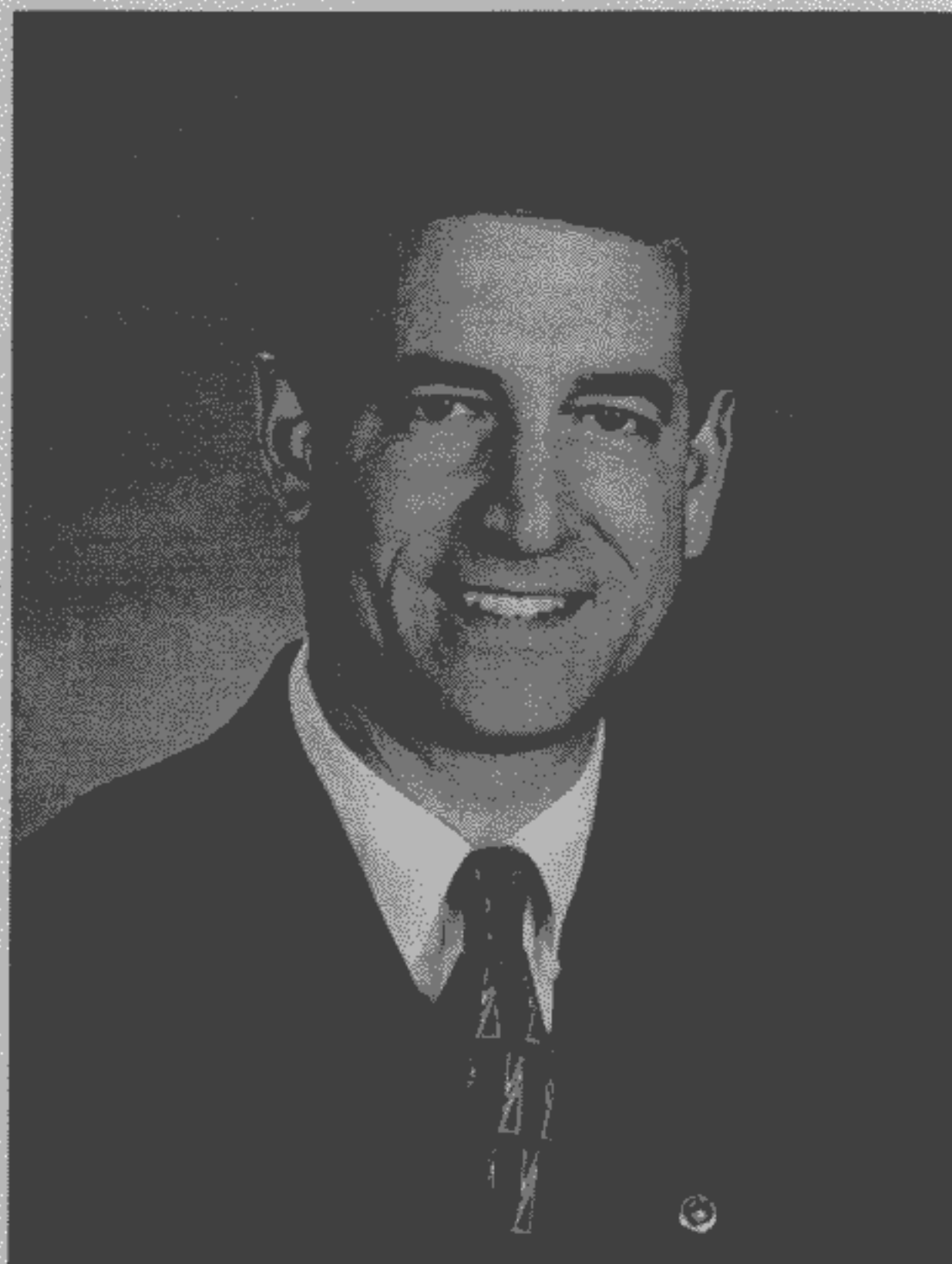
Ditto for international links who desire to connect to the U.S.—namely, just about everyone.

You're a subscriber and you want to put up a Web page? Submit it to your site administrator for an approved rating that will be permanently and unalterably attached to your URL. The network will check that it's there when a browser requests your page, and refuse transmission without it. Open a URL yourself and the network will first check your provider's User Profile Database, verifying that you're entitled to receive the rating of each page you request, the equivalent of the motion picture rating system. All enforced by network sniffer programs that the ECC runs each night, creeping into your system and then creeping out, an electronic knock on a nighttime door that's required to be left wide open.

Nothing good last forever—only until government gets its hands on it. Your grandchildren will never believe how it once was.

DAVID APPELL

David Appell has been using the Internet since 1988.



Say What You Will: Sen. Russ Feingold thinks the Exon legislation is unnecessary and unconstitutional.

national Business magazine, for example, three of the top ten fastest growing U.S.-based international businesses surveyed last year were in the networking market, with two of those companies, Bay Networks and Cisco Systems, located in Silicon Valley.

At Sun Microsystems, Internet-related income is expected to account for about 15 percent of Sun's expected revenues of \$7 billion in fiscal 1996, according to Phil Rueppel, an analyst with Alex Brown. Sun hardware cur-

rently accounts for more than 50 percent of the world's Internet servers, while 80 percent of Internet applications are first developed on locally designed workstations. Similarly, at Cisco, the personnel department continued to hire new employees at the rate of two to three a day even during the worst moments of the recent local recession.

The Internet's hypergrowth is fueling sales at other local firms as

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