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Independence Day

By Lee Foster

Microsoft has been known to make good products. Not excellent or innovative, but good and almost everyone on the planet with a computer, will probably at some point, whether they know it or not, have some Microsoft code somewhere within their little chips. This is also what Microsoft want. They want to be the only software company, so everyone will buy, live and breathe Microsoft.

But there are also other companies who would like that same opportunity. The trouble is, should their product be seen as competitive with a similar Microsoft one, somebody will have to drop their idea and move on. Microsoft never back out. Buy out, yes. Back out, no. And should someone continue to ignore their threats to leave alone and go away, suddenly their products crash on the Windows OS (allegedly). No one can beat Microsoft. They have next to unlimited amounts of cash to buy and bully. An enormous strangle hold on the PC. Power and influence to make huge semiconductor companies throw \$ millions of research down the drain in order to protect Microsoft's dominance. In fact, if nothing is done about it, the future of our freedom could be at stake. The DoJ in America have probably left it too late to have any effect. I just hope the little people win this time.

Imagine if you will, banks, military, airports, industry, commerce, homes, schools and all other electrical goods containing Microsoft code. Then imagine somewhere in a secret room, Bill Gates and his team decide now is the time to take over as government. The President refuses.

Bill says, "Mr President, since 1995, Microsoft has been writing code in with the OS that will, with a simple command and a few pass words, totally destroy all data on all computers, everywhere that uses Microsoft code of any kind. We've downloaded the World's military databases. We can wipe the balances off all banks databases. In fact, we can set off all the nuclear arsenal on Earth right from my office. There is nothing you can do to stop me. There is no alternative. I have America and damn good advertisers to thank for that. Luckily we didn't choose Apple's ad men."

"You've made it so that people can only buy our products. We can charge what we like, be as

buggy as we like. What can you do about it? Go else where? Doubt it. If you know what's good for you, you'll be wise to pass me the key to the world, failing that, I'll just buy it."

For this reason, the DoJ ruling is essential to show what a threat Microsoft is. Without competition, where is the pressure to improve, innovate, react to criticism? This is why Apple needs to spill the beans on everything Microsoft has done to undermine them. The alleged bug to kill QuickTime, Real Audio, Netscape, Sun etc., are all proof of a sinister plot. Bill Gates may be acting dumb in the witness box, but their business practice says it all.

Why isn't there another company producing an Office 98 package? (Because Microsoft is big enough to flood the market.) Why should Apple have to depend on a another company's piece of software to survive? (As above and to allow Microsoft to control its monopoly behind closed doors.) When a threat to stop developing Mac apps was issued, Apple falls over to promote IE4. Should a company be allowed to have such a powerful influence over other companies to the extent that they can kill them off with the blink of an eye? Almost everyone is throwing IE4 about. Free on this CD, free with this ISP. They are just as guilty as Microsoft for not giving users a choice. I personally don't like IE4. Not that it's Microsoft's, I just don't like it. That's why I'm glad Netscape is still about so I can use somebody elses offering. But for how much longer?

Perhaps 1998/1999 will be the year of independence for the computer industry. Perhaps the people will be free to choose the software of their choice and perhaps there will be other companies around who will not be intimidated when they produce such competitive software. Quality sells itself. Microsoft doesn't seem to realise this. Perhaps some day, Apple will once again be among the big guns, making technological advances without the threat of being crushed by a jealous, money hungry company. Perhaps.

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