

## ho's first against the wall?

By Graham Aldrid

Seems like I sounded a few chords with my last on the subject of language. This could become a movement, particularly regarding the term Bug, especially when it refers to the Millennium cock-up. But before someone casts me as Che Guevara or Fidel Castro, let's ponder a couple of things.

The first is the position from which my argument starts. Unlike the political revolutionary, my position is not anti-establishment. Neither do I wish to restart the development of computing, going back to an earlier time, when RAM was RAM- none of this virtual RAM stuff; when Hard Disks were measured in tens of Megabytes and applications took up 1MB of RAM. (Mind you, the latter might be something the software houses should think about.)

If anything, my argument for a revolution is based on the fact that I am pro technology- it is something which can improve all our lives. All the Industry, from Designers through to users should be aware that there are budding Chés and Fidels out there and language is something which can be used to isolate them or encourage them. They can be isolated by making sure that the Industry communicates in everyday language, not gobbledygook. They can be encouraged, every time some clever nerd, working for one of the big boys thinks up a function, then calls it something (because everything's got to have a name, hasn't it?) which in pure terms, has little or nothing to do with what it does, then proceeds to explain it to me in terms which, although English, make as much sense as a gynaecology lecture at the Ulan Bator Medical School.

t's compounded by a report I heard about on the radio recently. Something like 30% plus of all major Computer installations result in zero gain, either financial or in efficiency. Yes folks that's ZERO, as in no return on investment. In many cases the costs exceeded the original budgets by anything up to 100%. So who's letting this happen and why?

Let's guess. Let's look at who makes the decisions. Not approvals, as in Board of Directors. The real decisions are made by I.T. Managers. These are the guys who talk to computers companies in their own language. These are the ones who, when you ask a simple question about why a

little bit of information can't be included, reply with a long memo telling you exactly why you should have thought about this 30 years ago when the system was designed. The fact that you were less than an egg at the time is not his problem.

If your budget can stand the cost, yes they'll get a programmer onto it for 6 weeks. After they've done the other jobs they have already allocated, so they can start sometime around 2006. These jobs will generally be for Finance Dept because they have to keep on their right side, don't they. You have no idea the time that will be saved by writing them a Elittle, macro for a spreadsheet taking up more programming resources than NASA put into a Space Launch.

Computer manufacturers, Software Suppliers and I.T. Managers have managed to perpetrate an enormous con on the rest of us. They communicate in their own language to exclude us and expect us to fork out our cash on faith for efficiency or financial gains which, given better odds than winning the lottery, never appear.

Any historians out there remember the story of the Southsea Bubble???

f technology is for all the people, then it should not exclude great chunks of population by setting up a secret society which communicates only with like minded individuals. At some point- and it will be soon you will have no choice. You cannot disenfranchise people and expect them to sit idly by while you do it. The Luddites are coming, you have to make sure they don't have a constituency to vote for them.

Remember what I said: in the 1950's if you said to anyone that science would be on a back foot, come the 90's, with people openly questioning the right of a scientist to do their job, you would have been laughed out of the room. Computing could face the same situation and would you listen to me?

I hope I never have to say I told you so...

And following on from that, I assume that you have all been watching the TV of late and been impressed with one William Clinton's ability to discuss whether is, is or isn't is, (or as I heard someone in Yorkshire say once, tizzizzintit? Tr: It is his isn't it?) to the extent that it sounds like some 60's Maharishi or Bertrand Russell, discussing a definition of being or sentience. (See my PS below) Now I got the same impression reading the reports of another examination by the judiciary the other day.

God help us if anyone were to teach Lawyers the conditional subjunctive tense or any other obscure angle of language. Would that it were possible? If it had been going to be possible, then it might never have been, had it happened. Schrodingers Cats cradle....

What?

I don,t know, I'm just amazed that some Judge doesn't stop the witness at some point and say: "Now just a minute, what you're saying is... for the benefit of the Jury" Because the end of it, wherever a legal case is heard or evidence given, if we are affected, we are the Jury. If we can identify that the one giving evidence is prevaricating or trying to redefine the language using some weird semi-legal term or worse, just changing tack part way through because they have been asked an awkward question, which they can,t answer, we can make our own judgments.

Unfortunately,the process of Law permits such insanities as exist to protect the individual and their civil rights. Now the question has to be asked, do Corporations have rights? Does an institution, albeit in the body of a person, have rights? Rather do they have obligations to Society, in return for the permissions it grants to them to conduct their activities within a legal framework?

hich brings me back to language and whether is, is or isn't is. Whether it's good for the business as consumers to see the major players kicking shit out of each other in Court only to see them, caught by a secret camera, snogging (trans: tongue wrestling) in the Car park afterwards. I'm saying no more, given the fact that those in question are notoriously litigious.

But it's not in everyone's best interest...

I will leave that without any interpretation or expansion.

Finally, thanks to Thel in Muncie and another friend from California whose E-Mail got lost in my recent house, business and office move but who made so much sense I decided he must be there on missionary work, there.

 [Graham Aldrid](#)