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Opins & FAQs Re the State of Affairs

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Dear Reader, it's a slippery slope to the end of summer. Nasty heat and humidity, then – poof! – leaves change, bummer. We're sending you this shortie to see if you're awake. A couple of paragraphs of info-gruel is all our editor can take!

WINDOWS on...

How Broad the Band?

Both of Minnesota's U.S. Senators have been busy these past couple of weeks hosting several commissioners from the Federal Communications Commission discussing latent and emerging internet issues with interested citizens. Last week *Senator Franken* co-hosted, along with *Secretary of State Mark Ritchie*, a quasi-hearing on the subject of Net Neutrality, the term for a concept that all information flowing across the internet should be treated equally. Internet companies, content providers like Google and delivery services like Comcast are trying to find ways to quantify the use of band width to charge heavy users (data rich video is one example) a premium. If we have this right, the net neutrals fear that setting aside premium bandwidth means less access for the peeps.

The audience, which filled the auditorium at Minneapolis South High School, heard impassioned pro neutrality speeches from both the good Senator and the Secretary of State who implied that encroaching premium access would hamper the ability of voters to follow the election process as many did during the Franken-Coleman recount. The two FCC Commissioners on hand were also clearly for net neutrality; in their introductory remarks each called for stricter FCC regulation of the internet arguing that the publicly established service is more than an information delivery mechanism. Both *Commissioners Michael Copps* and *Mignon Clyburn* called for regulatory oversight similar to what the FCC currently enjoys over the airwaves. It was first-come first-served in terms of public testimony and fair to say that those who were able to express their opinions were like-minded in preserving net neutrality. There were some among the crowd who did not speak up who privately expressed opinions that the problem of available bandwidth is an engineering problem that can be solved if the public wants to subsidize or if the private sector is allowed to charge for premium service and put a percentage of profits back into expanding available bandwidth for the consumption of and use by the general public.

Many of those in attendance at the Carlson School this week where *Senator Amy Klobuchar* played host to *FCC Chair Julius Genachowski* would tell you that current internet providers, cable companies and telcos alike are using the monopolies they enjoy thru local franchising authorities are choking the flow of information with outdated inadequate technology. Broad Banders propose federally-subsidized fiber construction built over existing systems and designed to reach far and wide into the most rural outposts from sea to shining sea, assisting folks who don't receive service from today's providers who cannot find cost-effective ways to string miles of coaxial cable to one hermit on a mountain in Wyoming. The same providers also wince when critics wag their fingers in shame blaming them for the United States being so far behind the likes of South Korea when it comes to internet speed and capacity, defending themselves by saying they are well ahead of America's demand for said speed.

These are complicated issues and bring with them all kinds of complexities like information access and freedom of speech/press. Heck, it just occurred to us that WE are internet publishers. Minnesota is fortunate that both of its respected Senators are trying to bring forward these complicated matters even in the deafening din of economic calamity. We would encourage them going forward to facilitate formats where all sides have a chance at meaningful dialogue. There is no reason to lurch into unnecessary regulation or subsidy in an era of scarcity if the market can be coaxed into expanding service for profit and in the public interest.

Ponder This...

We have uncovered an essential truth: At the root of any bureaucracy is the dynamic that those who do not know what to do spend countless hours trying to figure out how to do it.

BULLETINS and BYTES...

This in from *Sheldon Mains*, one of the thought leaders who spoke out on Net Neutrality at the aforementioned Franken hearing:

How about a plug for a fundraising effort for the *Twin Cities Media Alliance*? [Ed. Note: Mr. Mains is that august group's volunteer Board Chair.] Join us this Sunday, August 29, 6:30 p.m, at the Black Dog Café for our "Pick of the Market" dinner to benefit The Daily Planet and you'll be helping the Planet continue to provide the Twin Cities with the best in home-grown coverage of politics, the arts, the environment, and our diverse array of communities. Featuring the freshest ingredients available that day at the Saint Paul Farmers Market – where, like these raspberries, everything has to be produced within 50 miles of the Twin Cities – "Pick of the Market" comes to you from the hands of Shelagh Connolly, a master chef with 30 years of experience in creating venturesome menus. Here are some links for readers who may be interested. For more info about the "Pre event" for members: <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2010/08/12/these-trucks-only-go-short-way-bring-you-great-meal>. To sign up for dinner: <https://www.thedatabank.com/dpg/262/donate.asp?formid=TCM-Event&c=5143285>. To become a member: <http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Twin-Cities-Media-Alliance>.

QUARKS and QUOTES...

Our friend *Mark Andrew* is so busy he only reads Online once a month. This on our Firecracker of the Year issue: [Ed. Note: His warm but lengthy response was edited for space]

Hey, just read the July 4th Firecracker issue of ONLINE...thanks for the touch—this one got by me, in part because I am in the midst of a work jag that is robbing me of time and leisure. The Firecracker mention is appreciated, especially since you didn't pan the unflattering photo in MSP's State Fair shoot. Regarding the photo, as my old boss Roger Moe used to say, "You can't make chicken salad out of chicken sh*t". Any-hooo, I also appreciate the tip 'o the hat to GreenMark, which had several Sycophan (too tired to spellcheck) years, and is gradually emerging intact. GreenMark's creation of the Pentair deal did, indeed, get us famous in sports...all of 'em are calling—NASCAR, the Cowboys, Olympic connections, many teams—but at the end of the day, will they monetize? Only the fates know. And the bloodless negotiators.

As you both know from hearing me yammer about this for a decade, the green sports space is finally emerging and happily, we are pioneers. The Pentair deal is the first such green sponsorship sold as a category, ever in sports. Now a bunch of them are trying to do it, but most teams don't know what to do. They are still lost in the sad little notion that appearing to do something good is equal to actually doing it...they haven't figured out that people are ahead of them...It is fun to see these team owners who blew us off a couple of years ago sheepishly inviting us to "talk". Not that they want to pay mind you. You would have enjoyed the irony of GreenMark's attending the press conference on LEED certification of the ballpark, because I know you guys remember well how hard it was to sell the "green idea" even four years ago.

From *Aron Kahn*:

Hope all is well. Always appreciate the work and wit that goes into the newsletter. I'm at Manhattan Beach, hard by the ocean, from which we all came, if you believe the Darwinians, and there's no reason not to, in my view. Feels like home every time I run in. In the mornings, the view from my balcony always is the same: A long horizontal line of surfers in black wetsuits sitting astride their boards, rising and falling with the swells, a few hundred feet off the beach, with only the horizon behind them, waiting for the big one and looking like a line of crows on a high wire along a country road. The French fur traders made a wrong turn at the Mississippi and we Minnies are living their mistake.