

Monopoly Madness

Microsoft not guilty of unfair business tactics

Charles E. Wilson, Secretary of Defense, says the Eisenhower administration is best remembered for the quote, "What's good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa."



BRENDAN GUY



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

Today, that quote could best be applied to the computer company Microsoft, a company that provides thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in taxes and revolutionized the computer industry in this country and throughout the world.

Yet despite all the good Microsoft does, it is now under attack from the Department of Justice for anti-trust violations and is only business leader with a worse public image than Bill Gates is Montgomery Burns.

This is not a good thing. Microsoft is being demonized regarding to market its Internet browser, Internet Explorer, as part of its Windows 98 operating system. This is considered restraint of trade because about 90 percent of the computers on the planet run off of Windows.

Both the federal government and most Microsoft's major competitors believe that if Microsoft is allowed to market an Internet browser with Windows, no one else will have any incentive to buy a competitor's browser.

This is of course a baseless fear. Microsoft's main competitor in the browser industry, Netscape, already controls 40 percent of the market and its browser is available free on the Internet.

The browser industry is open to competition, which means the company that produces the best product at the cheapest price is going to win. Windows does give Microsoft a powerful advantage in this market, but it does not mean Microsoft possesses a monopoly, which requires government involvement should not be involved.

This is a capitalist economic system, companies that do not engage in predatory business practices are companies that fail. The reason Microsoft has been so successful is because Bill Gates understands this.

Microsoft pulled a David and Goliath on the once seemingly invincible IBM, an object lesson that has never been lost on Bill Gates. He understands that the computer industry is constantly changing (as anyone who has had the distinct pleasure of buying a computer only to find it is obsolete three months later should know) and that if Microsoft does not aggressively market its products and work to crush its competitors, it will get crushed.

Microsoft is by no means all powerful. Its main strength is software for personal computers, an important market but one that is declining in importance. The personal computer market is completely saturated, with most sales now coming from replacements of older models not new customers.

This means if Microsoft wants to continue the aggressive expansionist policies that have made it so successful, it is going to have to enter new markets.

Computer industry specialists believe the next major markets will be servers, information appliances and embedded software systems. These are all markets with established companies that are more than capable of defending themselves and Microsoft has been floundering in its attempts to compete with them.

Microsoft's Win2000 product is already over two years behind schedule (crippling Microsoft's efforts to compete in the critical business server market), Microsoft Network only has two million customers compared to the 16 million held by America On-Line and then there is Microsoft's Web TV, the biggest commercial flop since New Coke. Microsoft is still an immensely powerful company but it faces ferocious competition in most of the markets it will need to expand in to survive.

It is appropriate to expect Microsoft to fight for its life in the marketplace, it is not appropriate to expect it to fight for its life in the courts.

Microsoft provides good products at reasonable prices and in doing so has made computers widely available across the whole country. It pumps billions of dollars into the economy every year, making the entire country richer. It helps facilitate the development of new technologies that improve the lives of everyone.

In other words, Microsoft is good for the country. Which means this anti-trust suit has to be bad for the country. Microsoft has achieved its prominence by beating its competition on the open market; it should not be punished for being successful.

With the net value of Microsoft stock currently valued around 400 billion dollars, can the country afford to risk damaging a company that plays that vital of a role in the national economy? Gates is a smart man; he knows if he gets lazy and complacent he will get crushed in the marketplace, which is precisely why he has never gotten lazy and complacent.

His competitors are understandably frustrated and are trying to use the power of the federal government to beat the man they have found to be unbeatable. Maybe they should work on improving their own products instead? Microsoft makes this country richer, stronger and better; it should be allowed to continue to do this.

Brendan Guy is a senior political science and history major.

Local merchants need to stop taking advantage of Aggies

Most people know college students are "broke." So, why does everything cost more in college towns?



CHRISTIAN ROBBINS

This is a huge mystery Aggies, as well, as other college students.

Students at Texas A&M are being financially exploited by businesses, as well as, Texas A&M University. According to a news story on KBTX-TV, College Station merchants consider Aggies to be the lifeline of their businesses.

This is not a startling discovery considering the businesses charge students more for clothes, groceries, gas and other everyday items, than they would be able to charge in any other city.

In College Station, students pay astronomical prices to live in apartments that would be considered sub-standard in a major metropolitan city. Rent, food, car repair and almost all items bought on-campus cost more on average than in normal areas.

The only possible reason why businesses feel the need to charge so much is they think that students can afford it, but this is obviously not the case since many Aggies collect some form of federal financial aid to help offset the cost of tuition.

"Well," the local businessman thinks, "if many students have jobs, then surely they can afford to pay our high prices."

Wrong conclusion, Mr. Businessman. College students cannot afford high prices because not only are they being exploited financially by being overcharged, but they are being exploited economically by being underpaid by employers in the Bryan-College Station area.

Students in college towns are generally paid less than their counterparts in other cities because businesses know there is an abundance of cheap labor.

The average yearly salary for a college student before taxes is \$11, 550.

According to the United States Government, this is below the poverty level. Students who are part-time workers make less

than \$5760 a year. Given the situation, it is disgraceful that businesses would charge students more money for basic necessities.

How do businesses justify this travesty of justice?

"Students can get money from their parents." This is obviously not the case or students would not get jobs to offset tuition.

Not all Aggies depend solely on their parents for financial support and parents who do support their children financially should not have to pay for price hikes, in addition to high tuition.

"Students can use coupons." Some businesses do give good coupons and those businesses deserve congratulations, but if an item costs the same without the coupon, then why waste the paper?

"Local businesses donate money to A&M, thus giving students their money back." Students donate to A&M programs at the beginning of each semester. It is called tuition.

Donation should not be a justification for high prices. Donating to Texas A&M programs is in the best interest of Bryan-College Station merchants and most importantly it is tax-deductible.

The problem has been stated, so what is the solution? Aggies could live in tents on campus and eat only at Hot Dog, Etc., but it rains too much here. Or Aggies could boycott local merchants, but that would result in tremendous suffering.

Businesses know students have classes to worry about and do not have the time or energy to organize protest rallies over the price of milk.

Basically, there is no solution because students would have to give up eating, working, shopping and sleeping, so they have no choice but to patronize business that take advantage of them.

The only other hope is for the businesses to realize the error in their ways, realize that Aggies are not cash cows and respect them financially for being the lifelines of their businesses.

Christian Robbins is a junior speech communications major.

Quoted presidents not actually Christian

In response to Ryan McMullan's Feb. 25 mail call.

This is in reply to the mail call that implied that our founding fathers were Christian and that our nation was founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My friend, you are sorely mistaken. A majority of the founding fathers were either Deists or Unitarians.

It was interesting to me that you so eagerly spout off quotes without any references. Unfortunately I will not afford you that same luxury.

I preserve the truth of the American history, and that history is that this nation was designed to be secular.

Thomas Jefferson once said that Morris, a friend of Washington's, "often told me that General Washington believed no more of that system (Christianity) than he himself did." (*Memoir and Correspondence of T. Jefferson, IV, p. 512*).

James Madison said "in no instance have ... the churches been guardians of the liberties of the people" (*The Religious Beliefs of Our Presidents, Steiner*).

In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson decries the Christian God as a "hocus pocus phantasm of a God, like another Cereberus, with one body and three heads" (*Steiner*).

Our second president of the United States, John Adams said "the divinity of Jesus is made a convenient cover for absurdity" and "this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it" (two separate letters in *A Bibliographical Dictionary of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Free Thinkers*).

Other founding fathers and presidents that were not Christian are the following: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Paine, John Quincy Adams, and Ulysses S. Grant.

Nathan Bosdet
Class of '02
Accompanied by 11 signatures

Reconstruction era laws good for Texas

In response to David Lee's Feb. 24 opinion column.

After reading David Lee's column on Governor George W. Bush, some facts need to be stated in response to his misinformed comments on reconstruction.

Among the measures that were passed after the Civil War, mainly by Radical Republicans, were laws to strengthen the Freedman's Bureau, civil rights acts, the 13th (which abolished slavery), 14th, and 15th amendments.

Black people were able to attain voting rights, own land, become politicians, become educated and have other rights. Many black colleges were created during this period.

Under the provisions of the Morrill Land Grant College Act, Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M were created.

The existence of these schools can be credited to ex-slave Matthew Gaines and other Black legislatures of the Reconstruction.

Yet, right-wing forces of the Democratic Party of the late 1800s passed segregationist Jim Crow laws. They also passed the grandfather clause, poll tax, and the literacy test that created barriers for Blacks to vote.

The final nail in the Reconstruction coffin was the Supreme Court's *Plessy vs. Ferguson* ruling in 1896 which upheld the "Separate but Equal" doctrine. The ruling was not overturned until the 1954 *Brown vs. Board* decision.

So I wonder now which group does Lee consider brutal and ruthless? Because of courageous people, the civil rights movement came.

Earl Smith
Graduate Student

Quayle would make good U.S. president

In response to David Lee's Feb. 16 opinion column.

Many in the media attempt to discredit Dan Quayle because of his misspelling of the word "potato." One only need watch Jay Leno's "Headlines" segment on Monday nights to see some of the stupid mistakes the media makes on a regular basis.

I'm sure the *Battalion* insiders know of many mistakes that their own paper also makes on a regular basis.

It is said that, "Actions speak louder than words," so let us not judge Quayle on his petty slip-ups, but rather let's judge him on his record. Author of the bestseller *Standing Firm*, Quayle was standing for family values before it was popular.

He was also one of the most active Vice Presidents in our nation's history.

I have read his book *Standing Firm*, and I have had the opportunity to hear him speak.

Nothing he said either in his book or in person was in the slightest bit uneducated.

As a matter of fact, Dan Quayle is one of a few politicians that truly inspires me. As an American, I would be proud to one day call Dan Quayle, "Mr. President."

Brian McCauley
Class of '02

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