

THE PAMPHLET IS DEAD: LONG LIVE THE WEB PAGE

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I do not seek to denigrate the efforts of the many talented writers and researchers who over the years have contributed to the movement; but I must tell all libertarians that the day of the pamphlet is over, dead, finished. I have seen the future and the future is the web publication. It is my sincere hope that this is the last pamphlet that the LA ever publishes. We should stop writing monographs. Instead we should be making contributions to web pages.

A web publication is not simply an electronic version of an LA Notes pamphlet. It is something that in look and feel and persistence and use is quite different. The LA's web strategy is not simply about putting up existing publications on the web. No, no, no. The web changes what we produce completely.

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

By now most of us will be familiar with the Web and what it does. Most of us believe that it will change everything; I certainly do. That includes the way politics is conducted. There are a number of features of the web

that are so powerful that they can only serve to revolutionise the way politics is conducted. Not only are these features revolutionary but they play into our hands. They give us an overwhelming advantage against the opposition. With the Web we shall rule forever.

LINKS

The first and most important of these features is linking. Linking is where you are viewing one web page, you click on your mouse and you are on a completely different web page. Surfing on the Net is an interactive experience. Compare that with reading a normal publication. I can't remember the last time I read something cover to cover. Certainly not a factual book. Humans have butterfly minds. We skip from one thing to the next. An issue arises. We have questions. We want those questions answered straight away. With a monograph, unless the author has had exactly the same thoughts as the reader, the reader will be frustrated.

But this isn't the case with the Web. With the Web the reader can skip about to his heart's content — so long as someone has set up the site so that he can. With the Web you can outline your argument in bullet-point form with links to information that backs up your argument. Similarly you can list the most common questions/comments/objections that your point of view raises and provide links to how you deal with them.

This makes politics a battle we can win. We can defend all our arguments. We can expose all the weaknesses in the enemy's arguments. The enemy cannot hope to make half a point and then make good his escape like he has always been able to on the television or radio. This time when he makes a point, any point, we will be able to respond.

Answering objections is far more important than anything else. People aren't really all that interested in the pros — they are interested in the cons. It is our ability to

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

answer these that will prove decisive. The Web makes this possible — in spades.

DISTRIBUTION

When you publish something to the Web anyone in the World can read it. Printing costs, distribution costs are next to zero.

Of course the fact that everyone can read your publication does not mean they will. They have to know about it. This is a rather harder task. I believe that newsgroups will provide the answers.

The Army has a great belief in Fire and Manoeuvre. This is the idea that when you encounter the enemy you fire so much lead in his general direction that he gets his head down and keeps it down. With newsgroups we can do something very similar. By producing bold ideas and then backing them up we can scare our enemies. This is the first step in achieving intellectual hegemony. When we get to the stage when enemy intellectuals are scared of taking us on, victory will be ours (if that isn't too collectivist a phrase).

DIRECT COMMUNICATION

With the Web you can communicate directly with your audience. Wow. For as long as I can remember politicians have had to go through the media. And what happens? What they say is taken out of context. They are goaded with loaded questions. They are presumed to be crooked. And what is the result? Politicians run a mile from saying anything that smacks of belief or truth.

But the Web changes that. You can communicate directly with the audience. Through linking you can hold what amounts to a dialogue with him. You can put forward your entire case and not just the minuscule amounts that the media put out at present. This encourages openness and honesty. Oh goody. Because that favours us. We are honest about our views and are prepared to answer the question.

For too long we have been scared about the media. It has been too easy to dismiss us with a sneer and a curled lip. Because they control. But no longer. Now we are in control. We can control every single aspect of what is reported.

In some respects the BBC already accepts this. The BBC has made the mistake of its life by setting up BBC Online. Compare BBC TV with the web site. You wouldn't have thought that the two were produced by the same organisation. Where TV seeks to make imbeciles the Web site educates, informs and treats the consumer as an intelligent individual. On the web site you can actually find out what is going on. When was the last time you could say that of BBC News? And most importantly the Paxmans of this world disappear. They are redundant. Now you can ask politicians directly — or at least go to their web site.

This is an idea that has yet to be taken up by the major parties. They are still too tied in to media-dominated politics and with the need to be safe. This leaves wide

open a whole new vista for the group that is prepared to take the bull by the horns.

EVOLUTION

Paper publications are all or nothing. You make all that effort, you publish and that's it — unless you write a second edition or something. It is amazingly inefficient that one person spends hours assembling facts into a pamphlet that is famous for a week and then it is another 20 years before someone else comes along and assembles the same facts. On the web, good work does not die.

Internet publications do not have to be all or nothing. They can evolve with time. You change your mind, you come up with a new argument, a new fact, a different way of putting things. The change can be made in a matter of seconds. Anyone who is similarly minded can also make a contribution.

EASIER FOR THE WRITER

This is also easier for the writer. For instance, if you happen to be in possession of one good fact you can do little with it. Writing a monograph is hard work and you may even have to resort to filler. With the web, the fact is all that you need — and a place to put it of course.

SEE WHAT I MEAN

Follow this link: http://wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk/patrick_crozier/Education2/. I have set up a prototype of the sort of thing I mean. It is a web site that purports to put forward the libertarian position. It is rough and ready, the graphics are poor and the only area it covers is education. Almost any libertarian (any human being) will be able to see the gaps. But what interests me is: is this the model? Can we extend this idea to encompass all libertarian thought?

TWO RULES OF WEB PUBLISHING

One screen. People on the web do not have the time to read screeds of information. One screen is the maximum. OK sometimes you have to go over that. Also keep the width down. Scanning a long line is tiring. Newspapers long ago realised it was easier to read columns. The same applies to the web. And anyway reading from a computer screen is a lot of hard work.

Answer the question. Not that libertarians are prone to obfuscation. But that is the way the Web works. It is an interactive medium and people expect straight talking.

THE FUTURE

Looking even further ahead, libertarians might like to think about broadcasting on the net. Lord knows people would far prefer to listen to things rather than reading them on the screen. Secondly, a friendly, sane voice is very reassuring.

I believe that this is our medium. It will change the world. It suits the thoughtfulness and boldness of libertarianism. It is the antithesis of media-dominated debate. The key to success is to learn how to use it.