

THE MILLENNIA COUNTDOWN

The Internet Commission

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In the year 2000, extreme problems will begin to arise on the internet. Ever since its inception, the internet has operated with the same discipline as a gold-mining town in the mid-1800s. Boasting on-line gambling, prostitution, freak shows and snake oil salesmen, it attracts ambitious people willing to risk everything to make their fortune on this techy version of staking a gold mining claim in a wild west town.

"Black Market" Currency

New encryption programs make it possible for people to transmit and receive business transactions in secret. This gives rise to a whole new underground smuggling trade dealing in drugs, stolen merchandise, and other illegal contraband. This apparently impenetrable shroud of secrecy simultaneously emboldens and cultivates a new breed of unscrupulous internet businessmen willing to break all the rules of decency and order.

Banking industry officials acknowledge the presence of "black market" currency, which hack artists have managed to fabricate from thin air with a nearly undetectable "decimal point shift" virus. The presence of black-market currency threatens the integrity of the entire

banking industry.

Pre-paid Credit Cards

While black-market currency is blazing a cancerous trail through

children, to have access to a credit card, something previously thought to be unconscionable.

Although conceived as a very positive innovation, the pre-paid credit card creates an unforeseen problem - it leaves no paper trail. While it is possible to trace the beginning and end points of the transaction, the actual owner of the credit card and recipient of the item sold are not known. As a result, teenagers soon know how to access the

paid pornography services.

In addition, a growing underworld establishes a bold new distribution of narcotics and other contraband. Using the pre-paid credit card is much the same as a cash transaction, only the seller and purchaser may be thousands of miles apart.

Outraged parents reach a boiling point over the decadent and subversive materials that their kids have access to. The FBI and local law enforcement spend an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out how to deal with the black market currency and the bold distribution of narcotics and other contraband. Congressmen

and Senators struggle to understand the causes of the rapidly eroding tax base, and some threaten to pull the plug on the internet. Does the right to free speech also include the right to make secret encrypted business transactions? Television and radio shows make these issues a hot topic of discussion, and the whole country begins to wrestle with the problem.

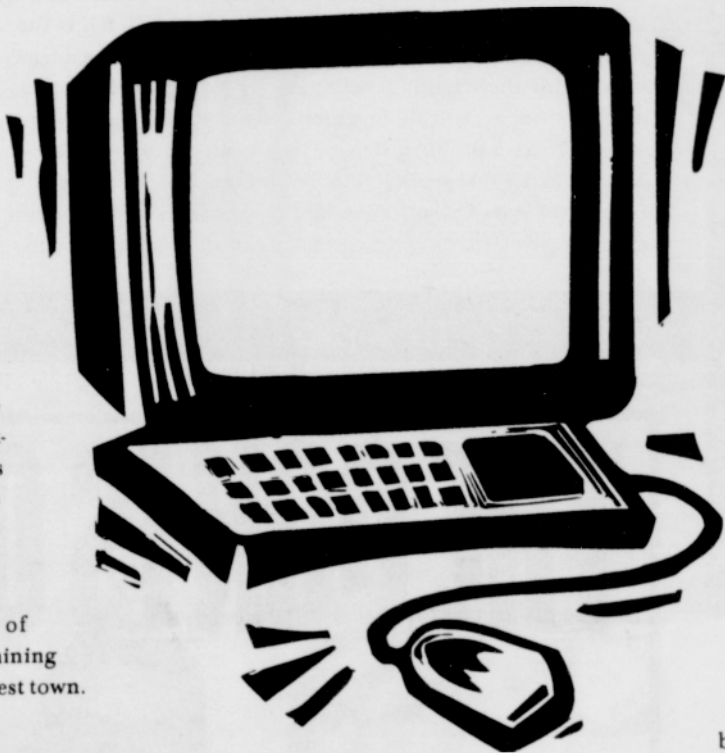
Internet Commission

With a high degree of reluctance, the US finally turns to the UN for a solution. A hastily called United Nations Summit is convened to deal with this very issue. Many in the US and other countries voice their distaste over the UN's role in solving

this worldwide crisis, but no other true global governmental entity exists. With much prodding from the US to move this authority to some entity other than the UN, the UN votes to establish an autonomous commission to govern the internet and world wide web. The commission is given sweeping powers and authority to control internet commerce, implement a system of operating standards, and to search out and eliminate criminal activity.

Virtual Country

After a few months of operation, an unusual proposal emerges for the commission to decide upon. A group of individuals has come forward with a plan for starting a



the economy, a more positive economic innovation will be taking place. Inspired by the success of prepaid phone cards, the Mastercard Corporation introduces a prepaid \$10 credit card to be sold at all major retail outlets. Other denominations of the credit card are planned for later release. This prepaid credit card is a one-time use card, and once its credit has been used, it is thrown away. Mastercard makes this a profitable venture by devising a highly automated system for handling these transactions and by charging a comparatively high discount rate for small transactions. This innovative card now makes it possible for all people, including

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