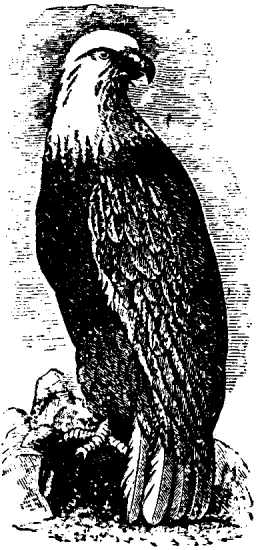


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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

January 2012

The Battle of the Internet

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing

the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

—from the *Declaration of Independence*

In 1983, PBS broadcast its documentary series *Vietnam: a Television History*. At the time, my television was connected to a TV antenna. The video quality was poor, with a lot of flipping and double images, but I recorded the series anyway. By the time that I'd completed the recording, I was convinced that *Vietnam: a Television History* was a credible account of the war. I kept the recording, regardless of the poor video quality. Although I transferred the recording to new tape a few years ago, it's still a recording of the original broadcast.

Over the years, I occasionally watched the recording again, most recently in November of 2011. By then, I'd been watching cable TV for several years and the poor video quality of the original recording seemed more important than had previously been the case. I decided to see if I could locate a better quality recording.

A search revealed that the documentary series was available from Amazon.com on either new DVDs or used videocassettes. I prefer videocassettes and, besides that, the used videocassettes were half the price of the new DVDs. I decided to buy the videocassettes. After completing the purchase, I belatedly decided to read the customer comments that are available on the Amazon.com website. Unexpectedly, those comments provided an even better reason for buying the videocassettes instead of the DVDs. I'll present here an excerpt from one of those comments.

... At the very least, one expects a DVD to offer the same content as the video....

The first episode alone reveals several omissions....

Another blatant omission concerns the French exploitation of Vietnamese rubber plantation workers. Here, the DVD not only edits out footage of workers in a plantation ... but it omits an entire interview with a Vietnamese national who describes the brutal treatment suffered by rubber workers. This man recalled a popular expression of the time in which the plantation workers were known as "fertilizer," because so many of those who died were buried beneath the trees among which they toiled. Unless you see the video, though, you'll never know this -- because the DVD cuts all of it out.

The edits I have seen so far (episode one) clearly seek to minimize Vietnamese suffering under the French colonial system. I can only imagine what the later episodes omit. The producers seem to want to put a fresh "spin" on their documentary -- watering down harsh imagery and language, and thus sanitizing the war. This is a shameful achievement, and one that I find hard to believe PBS condones. It is all the more appalling given the stature of the original program.

... It's worth noting that, on the PBS website for the documentary, even the official program transcript has been altered to reflect the "new and improved" version. Why would this highly touted documentary seek to rewrite its own lauded history? Are there political pressures at work? ...

Several other customers commented variously on the editing to which the documentary had been subjected but that one comment makes the point well enough. Since I didn't buy the DVDs, I can't verify the accuracy of the comments. I took the excerpt shown above from the comment exactly as it appeared on the website. I'll grant that such revisions of historical accounts today are probably not directed by a central agency. Nevertheless, they are reminiscent in principle of *The Ministry of Truth*, in George Orwell's *1984*.

At this moment, for example, in 1984 (if it was 1984), Oceania was at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia. In no public or private utterance was it ever admitted that the three powers had at any time been grouped along different lines. Actually, as Winston well knew, it was only four years since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia. But there [sic] was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control... →

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The frightening thing, he reflected ... was that it might all be true. If the Party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, *it never happened* — that, surely, was more terrifying than mere torture and death.

... And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed — if all records told the same tale — then the lie passed into history and became truth. “Who controls the past,” ran the Party slogan, “controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. “Reality control,” they called it; In Newspeak, “doublethink.”

—from *1984*, by George Orwell

It isn't that bad yet because some copies of the original broadcast still exist. However, there's a concerted effort to eliminate VCRs completely. You can't even get old ones repaired. How much longer will the recordings on videocassettes be viewable?

Here's another thing to consider. While it's true that one falsification of a historical account doesn't constitute “a long train of abuses and usurpations”, it's also true that the revision of *Vietnam: a Television History* isn't the only example of attempts to revise information or to prevent access to it. Much of the information that's available today is available via the internet. That medium is under attack.

The Frontiersman Website was, for a while, hosted on the Awardspace hosting service. Early in 2011, that hosting service began to block access to selected issues of the newsletter. Here's an excerpt from their explanation.

... we have enabled automatic content filtering....
Your page contains these forbidden words:

ORAL SEX [1]

and thus out automatic [sic] is making the redirect and is blocking your website....

Please note that for security reasons we cannot disclose the full list of forbidden words.

—Vincent Harris, Dedicated Support Team

Awardspace content filtering blocked access to a large number of issues of the newsletter. Access to the specific issue addressed in the explanation, above, was blocked because that issue contained a letter to the editor that was, at the time of its publication, a part of the ongoing discussion of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. The same “forbidden words” were on most of the news services in the country at that time but, by January of 2011, those words had become forbidden, even on a political website to

which access was entirely voluntary. Not only was I expected to adjust the content of a published document, *a la* The Ministry of Truth, I was prohibited from even knowing which words I was prohibited from using in the document. Such enforcement of forbidden words is a chilling reminder of Orwell's Newspeak.

Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly *one* word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten.... Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller.

—from *1984*, by George Orwell

Not all hosting services use automatic content filtering (yet) so I was able to find other hosting for *The Frontiersman Website*. However, that only led to the next item in what's beginning to look like a “long train of abuses and usurpations”. Surveillance of internet use, it seems, has become pervasive. In February of 2011, I received this report from a subscriber.

Oh, my friends sister ... did visit your website & 2 days later on a flight she had already booked ... she got “bumped” and TSA'd due to (they said) she accessed an anti-Gov't website!! She finally got it all cleared up & was allowed to take a next day flight. But she wrote to her brother (my friend) & said she's not going to log on to your website anymore!!

—from a letter to the editor

So, you can be harassed or even punished for visiting an unapproved website.

It gets worse. If I send an email message to a customer who uses the Yahoo email service and, if my message includes a link to any of the locations of *The Frontiersman Website*, then Yahoo refuses to deliver the message for “policy reasons”. One time, when I experimentally replaced the link with an image of the link, Yahoo delivered the message but removed the image. I've suggested to those of my correspondents who use Yahoo that they should cancel their Yahoo accounts. I'm not aware of any one of them who's actually done so. The excuses that I've received have been lame.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

— attributed to Edmund Burke

Yahoo isn't the only institution that blocks links to *The Frontiersman Website*. For a year or more, there's been a filter on my outgoing email. I don't know who installed it or →

when it was installed. I discovered it after I became aware that some of my email messages were not being delivered to the intended recipients. Here's how the filter works. If I send an email message that includes a link to the main location of *The Frontiersman Website*, then that message is intercepted and deleted. Another message that's identical except for the link will be delivered immediately. I occasionally send pairs of test messages to see if the filter is still working. So far, it is.

It's beginning to seem a lot like a "long train of abuses and usurpations". It isn't even a surprise. Indeed, it's been long anticipated. Here are some observations from 1996, when the internet was young.

If you are not aware of it, there is a battle going on in cyberspace, which is over freedom of speech vs government attempts to control it. I think, and I hope, that governments everywhere have met their match. The InterNet has been called, "The world's biggest anarchy." What is being seen for the first time in human history, is absolutely unmoderated exchanges of ideas between millions of ordinary people all around the world. For the first time ever, people who have felt themselves to be social outcasts, sicos if you will, are freely and proudly exchanging thoughts and ideas (and pictures) with others of similar bent. The InterNet, regardless of what the conservative masters expect from their slaves, is destined I think, to become THE most significant event this century. And I honestly think that governments at all levels are terrified of it. Imagine, ordinary people, talking to each other!! You might keep an eye on the ACLU challenge to the censorship provisions of the "Communications decency Act," which Clinton recently rammed through the house. In *ACLU vs Reno* (the bitch), the government is trying to force InterNet users to "tag" so-called indecent or patently offensive words or images. Government lawyers, however, have already conceded that, "it would be impossible to implement this scheme given the technology currently available".... But even if they lose, this case gives a crystal clear insight into the motives of the feds, and their obsession with controlling every aspect of our lives.

—Richard, of Vankleek Hill, Ontario
from a letter to the editor, June 11, 1996

It might have been impossible to implement such a scheme using the technology that was available in 1996. The technology that's available today is entirely equal to the task.

There was some freedom in the country when it was young but, even then, the advocates of repression were hard at work. When they couldn't move by force, they moved by stealth. Incrementalism was their tool. When the internet was young, again we had some

freedom. Again, the advocates of repression were hard at work. Again, incrementalism was their tool. We haven't yet lost the battle of the internet, but we're losing it. Private email messages are intercepted, scanned, and deleted at the whim of the self-proclaimed guardians of communications decency. Back in February of 2001, visits by Americans to the Iraqi national website were blocked. Today, even visits by Americans to American websites of which the authorities disapprove are discouraged by selectively blocking access to the websites, by depriving potential visitors of the addresses, or by harassing or punishing people who manage to visit the websites anyway. In the larger situation, outside of the internet, historical documentaries can be "corrected" according to the current political dogma. All publishers and news agencies are licensed by the government. The power to license is the power to control. Thus, all information sources are, at least potentially, tools of the government.

The deterioration of freedom in the country is a long-standing trend. I perceive that the deterioration of freedom on the internet began to accelerate at about the beginning of 2011. It was already present before that but, since then, it seems to be getting worse faster than was previously the case. So, maybe 2012 is the critical year. Maybe the deterioration has reached a critical point after which it will reinforce itself. Maybe if we don't reverse the trend this year, then we'll no longer have the means to even complain to one another about it. We need to win this battle and it seems like most of us aren't even fighting it yet. The longer we wait, the more difficult it will become. The sooner people get started, the easier it will be for them to "throw off such government" and to "right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed". Why are we waiting? Let's get started. ¶

Request

Sam Aurelius Milam III

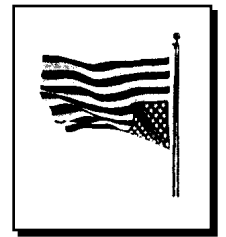
I'd appreciate it if some of you would go to libraries or to some other handy locations and try to access *Pharos* and *The Frontiersman Website*.

<http://frontiersman.t15.org/>

<http://pharos.0sites.org/> (It's a zero, the number not the letter.)

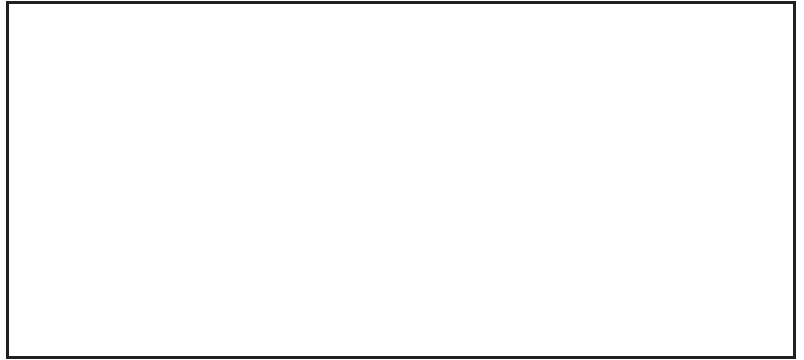
I just want to know if the websites are still generally accessible. ¶

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Nation in Distress

When opposing a police state,
sacrifice but never compromise.



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; Dewey and Betty; Sir Donald the Elusive; Eric, of Ione, California; and Steve, of Mililani, Hawaii. —editor

Rules of the Workplace

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by David, of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

- Following the rules will not get the job done.
- Getting the job done isn't an excuse for not following the rules.
- No matter how much you do, you never do enough.
- When confronted by a difficult problem you can solve it more easily by asking the question, "How would the Lone Ranger handle this?" ∞

Interesting Facts

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Steve, of Mililani, Hawaii. I didn't try to verify any of them.

- The nursery rhyme *Ring Around the Rosey* is a rhyme about the plague. Infected people would get red circular sores, "Ring around the rosey". The sores would smell badly so people would put flowers on their bodies, somewhere inconspicuously, to mask the odor, "a pocket full of posies". People who died from the plague would be cremated so as to reduce the possible spread of the disease, "ashes, ashes, we all fall down".
- The phrase "rule of thumb" is derived from an old English law stating that you could beat your wife with anything that wasn't thicker than your thumb.
- The name Jeep came from the abbreviation used in the army for the general purpose vehicle, G.P. ∞

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