

Editorial

Internet, television commingling soon to come to fruition

With Comcast, the country's largest Internet and cable provider, now owning NBC Universal, we hear it "will have an incentive to prioritize NBC shows over other local and independent voices and programs, making it even harder to find alternatives on the cable dial." Also that corporatized media destroys the "historic notions of a free, diverse, and independent press," and we are heading toward a Ministry of Culture straight out of George Orwell's "1984."

Doubtful. Comcast is buying a majority, 51 percent, of NBC Universal from the multinational corporation General Electric. General Electric will own the remaining share.

Editorial Board

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Media is driven by advertising, since that's where money is made. Enter the Internet and it becomes more unstable since Internet advertising rates aren't as strong as broadcast or print advertising rates.

During the last two decades, the top 10 media companies have owned, give or take, about 40 percent of all media and those 10 media companies have been a revolving door. Buyouts, mergers and bankruptcies are a regular occurrence.

Remember how AOL Time Warner was supposed to be

the end of independent media on the Internet? It lasted nine years.

Vivendi, which once owned part of NBC Universal — it sold its remaining share to General Electric — had the ambition to buy all the world's media. Its big buying spree in the late 1990s and 2000s failed within 10 years.

Viacom use to be the almighty media company owning numerous media outlets. Now it's number four because it spun off CBS and sold off other subsidiaries. It recognized it

had become too large to keep up with the necessary innovation.

Sure Comcast will now have Universal's film library and movie studio as well as the news outlets of MSNBC, CNBC and NBC News, but who watches broadcast news anymore, and broadcast TV for that matter?

On cable, NBC has few networks compared to others. Bravo, Syfy, The Weather Channel and USA Network are the only NBC Universal networks available through Mediacom cable in Ames. News Corporation owns five. Time Warner owns six. Viacom owns seven. There are 65 channels.

For Universal, this is the fifth owner in the last 20 years — it was previously owned by

Matsushita, Seagram's, Vivendi and General Electric.

How many actually like their Internet service providers? As the country begins to go wireless, service providers will likely go to battle with phone service companies because both provide wireless Internet. NBC Universal gives Comcast a new revenue stream and allows them to create content for the service they offer.

And why would Comcast give priority to NBC programming? That goes against the purpose of the Internet. Enough with the "it could happen" scenarios.

Comcast is simply getting ready for the future. Your television will soon be your portal to the Internet.

Law enforcement

Are we really afforded protection?

By Thomas.Hummer@iwastatedaily.com

Editor's note:

All names in this article have been changed to protect the peoples' safety and privacy.

Accountability applies to authority

Steve has always been an easy-going guy. He's never one to start confrontations, almost always laid back and has a multitude of friends who would testify to this in a heartbeat — myself being one of them. You can imagine my surprise when Steve told me he began taking self-defense classes because he feared for his safety.

I simply couldn't imagine anyone going out of their way to hurt Steve, and I told him so.

"Well, let me tell you why I'm taking the classes," he said.

A few weeks ago, I got into an argument with a co-worker of mine named Jeff. He's a really irrational guy, and things escalated pretty quickly. Our manager stepped in to try and calm Jeff down, but he just got angrier and turned on my manager. Soon after, Jeff got fired.

"The day after Jeff got fired, I happened to run into him at the movie theater in North Grand Mall. He followed me into the bathroom and assaulted me, bashing my head into the tiled wall."

Steve refused to fight Jeff, and instead called the police. Jeff ran away, but the police soon arrived at the scene and took a statement from Steve along with several photographs of the massive bump on his head.

"Since Jeff was my co-worker, I had his name, phone number and address available, which I gave to the police," Steve said. "They said they would contact me with their progress. I left the situation feeling like I had done the right thing in not fighting back and immediately contacting the authorities."

Much to his surprise, about a week went by and Steve hadn't heard back from the police. He called the department, and after being on hold for a while and having a brief conver-



An officer waits at the entryway to the old ISU Dairy Farm where an ISU police officer found a body at approximately 8:30 p.m. April 14, 2010, near the corner of Mortensen Road and Hayward Avenue. Many law officials do their duty to serve and protect, but there is a need to ensure the police are doing their duty all the time. File photo: Iowa State Daily

sation with a rather rude secretary, Steve discovered that the investigation of his case was still "ongoing."

"I left that conversation feeling disappointed, angry, confused and a number of other things," Steve said. "I mean, there was no 'investigation' to even be 'ongoing!' All they needed to do was show up at his place or track him down somehow. It's not like the guy skipped town! I don't feel safe knowing that this situation hasn't been resolved, and the police department clearly isn't doing their part in taking care of it. It scares me to think that they're more concerned with kids smoking pot in their dorms than citizens being physically assaulted. I've lived in Ames all my life, this is the one time I've ever asked anything from the police department, and I feel like my worries aren't being respected in the least."

It may be easy for some people brush this off and say that the police have bigger, more important things to worry about; but the truth is that they don't. They are in the line of public service, and nothing is more important than the public's safety. This is especially true considering

we've put so much effort into trying to prevent violent crimes from occurring — if you don't believe me, try going through airport security — and yet when one happens in our town, minimal action is taken. You'd think with the recent events in Arizona, the police would realize that this kind of do was show up at his place or track him down somehow. It's not like the guy skipped town! I don't feel safe knowing that this situation hasn't been resolved, and the police department clearly isn't doing their part in taking care of it. It scares me to think that they're more concerned with kids smoking pot in their dorms than citizens being physically assaulted. I've lived in Ames all my life, this is the one time I've ever asked anything from the police department, and I feel like my worries aren't being respected in the least."

Situations like this are precisely what the law enforcement exists to take care of, and the fact they're not doing so in a timely manner makes me wonder what they are spending their precious time on. But the inadequacy doesn't stop on the local level. Here's another story about the federal law enforcement also failing to pull their weight.

Rob owned and operated a store on eBay. A while back, he noticed two suspicious orders that were made within a day of each other. Both of the orders were for expensive electronics, both were being shipped to the Bronx, and both of the credit cards used had billing addresses in states far away from New York.

"I knew I had a case of identity

theft on my hands," Rob said. "I didn't ship out the order because it seemed so fishy, and soon enough, I got a phone call from each cardholder saying that my number appeared on their billing statement for a purchase they didn't make. I explained the situation to them and told them to refute the transactions with their respective credit card companies. I asked them to have their credit card companies and/or the authorities contact me, because I had the street addresses the shipments were supposed to go to, and the IP addresses for the computers the purchases were made from. They were both a little frazzled, but very appreciative."

About a week went by, and Rob was shocked that he hadn't received any calls regarding the situation. "As far as I knew, I was the only one with the evidence that could bring the thieves to justice," he said. "So, I decided to take matters into my own hands."

"First I called the FBI and some other government agencies who, according to their websites, are supposed to handle this sort of thing. All of them told me the same thing:

If it wasn't your information that was stolen, we can't do anything for you. Then they recommended that I contact the local authorities."

"When I called the Ames police, I explained the situation to them. I said 'I have the documentation to prove that these people attempted identity theft. I also have their street addresses and IP addresses. Can you help me?'"

The answer was a resounding "no." The local law enforcement simply told Rob to contact the FBI, starting the entire cycle over again.

"I don't get it," Rob said. "I had the information that could have brought these criminals to justice, but the people whose job it is to make that happen weren't interested at all. For all I know, the credit card companies could have had the information and contacted the authorities. But what if they didn't? The people I talked to wouldn't have known if that was the case, and they still weren't willing to help."

Rob was so disheartened after this experience that he closed his online store.

"I don't want to be part of a system that makes it so easy for people to get away with that, and I never want to deal with the unhelpful law enforcement again."

I'm sure everyone has encountered an impersonal police officer at some point. I'll even admit that I've actually had more positive experiences with the Ames police than negative. However, while an officer's bedside manner is important, in the long run it only matters as much as having a superbly nice waitress or grocery store clerk. What's really important is the work that's going on behind the scenes, and whether it's getting done efficiently.

Our tax dollars pay these people, so these stories should anger each and every one of you, because either of these situations could happen to you.

In the case of the waitress, we can just choose to not tip her as much. But we don't get to directly decide how much police earn, so it's up to us to make sure that they're doing what we pay them to do

Gun legislation

React before catastrophe strikes again

By Rick.Hanton@iwastatedaily.com

Iowa State Daily columnist Brandon Blue wrote about the ineffectiveness of writing new legislation to ban the sale of some types of dangerous weaponry in the United States. His point was that it doesn't help Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and the others killed and injured last week to write legislation now in reaction to the incident. I would debate this point, and argue that while new laws won't help the victims of the recent attack, this incident is a good excuse to re-examine our nation's gun laws or lack of gun laws.

It is true that in cases like the shooting in Tucson, Ariz., stricter gun laws may just force an attacker to use a knife instead. But what about the threat other individuals and criminals pose these days to the valiant police officers

across the United States, not to mention any civilians in the crossfire? Is it possible to honor the second amendment while keeping deadly weapons away from people who would seek to use them against their fellow man? I believe the answer is yes and that these changes are necessary for the public good.

At the very least, can we agree that a ban, or partial ban, on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines to help protect our police officers and citizens from extended rampages by criminals is in order? Gun rights advocates always repeat the phrase, "Guns don't kill people. People kill people;" but do we really need to make it easy to obtain the best killing device people have invented for killing individuals in the last 100,000 years? I think that we can and

should convince our congressional leaders to bring back the laws contained in the Federal Assault Weapons Ban that expired in 2004, perhaps with the new provisions added in recent replacement candidates that prevent subtle changes to weapons to make them compliant.

A brief disclaimer about myself: I have never shot a weapon, but I wouldn't be averse to doing so at a shooting range for fun.

If you want to go hunting or go to a shooting range for fun, more power to you, but I'm not sure you need a semi-automatic AK-47 to do it — I'm sure it would be interesting to shoot an Uzi, I question whether you need one at home for hunting or self-defense.

Creating federal laws to ban certain types of weapons may not stop the use by

criminals of illegally-obtained weapons, but at least it can lower the number of weapons floating around this country. With less weapons floating around and stricter controls on who can obtain guns, maybe we can drop the United States down from being the intentional gun death capital of the world to maybe second place. Do you realize that the death rate due to firearms in the United States is more than 10 people per 100,000 according to many sources? Iowa is on the low end with only five firearm deaths per 100,000, but Louisiana and Washington D.C. have rates more than 20 deaths per 100,000, according to 2007 data. For comparison, the rate of deaths in Canada where gun laws are fairly loose is four people per 100,000; in Japan where there are strict gun

laws, the rate is only 7 percent of a person per 100,000 people.

The correlation to me seems to be that stricter gun control laws decrease overall gun violence, and while a criminal intent on massacring people will likely still be able to procure a gun, an individual with less calculated intent to kill may be prevented by the barriers in place.

Gun advocates have spent the last week urging us to think of the victims of the tragedy in Tucson rather than the political enactment of gun control laws because they know that the last time we focused on gun control as we reacted to an assassination attempt, we created the recently deceased Federal Assault Weapons Ban. At the time the ban was called "the Brady Bill" for former

assistant to President Ronald Reagan Jim Brady, who was shot and permanently disabled in an assassination attempt on the president. Having met Giffords at a student conference in Arizona a few years ago, I hope her injuries are not as disabling as Brady's, but I think the incident in Arizona is just as good of an excuse as the shooting 30 years ago to be careful what weapons we allow in this country.

As the news stations report, it is physically and financially impossible to provide protection to all members of government in this country from rogue gunmen. But, we can at least take some measures to help prevent them from being gunned down like Giffords in a hail of bullets.