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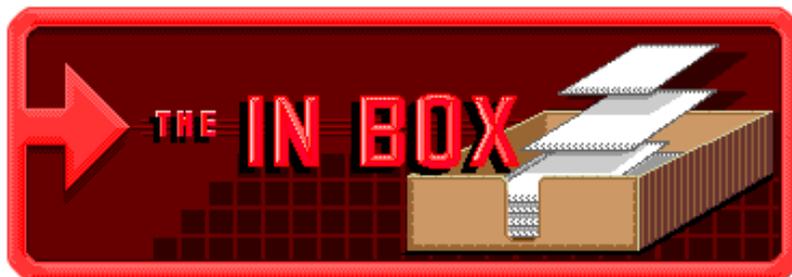
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**Whither the dot-com picket line?**

Today, it's news: Amazon.com workers in Seattle are staging walkouts to protest their severance packages and the closure of the Seattle customer service plant -- the site of what looked to be a promising union campaign. It's news today, but what happens when the negotiations drag on, when months of back-and-forth between spokespeople dulls our interest and stories about dot-com union campaigns no longer make the papers? When underpaid, overworked dot-com workers have no choice but to take it to the streets, what streets do they take it to?

Whither the picket line? The 60's era chants? The walking in circles to the shouting of the guy who's really starting to get a feel for this megaphone business. Whither the proud moment where one declares that No, One Will Not Eat In This Restaurant because One Does Not Cross Picket Lines?

Undoubtedly, Amazon.com strikers will set up Web sites, send out mass e-mailings, court journalists and collect signatures. But with no direct way to remind visitors to Amazon's site that buying books is anti-union, how are they going to put any pressure on the company? We union-supporters are only human; we need reminders, after all.

There's one solution: Banner ads. Bright flashing ones exhorting us to BUY YOUR BOOKS AT BORDERS.COM. Will Amazon warm to this idea? Probably not. But until someone comes up with a good online soapbox -- a noisy one -- we

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can only hope that Amazon.com union organizers get the word out, and quickly. -- **Amy Standen** [4:45 p.m. PST, Feb. 7, 2001]

Catholic League to Salon: Go to hell!

The editors and writers of Salon.com are "pimps and thugs" who are "seeking to offend all Christians," the president of the Catholic League, William Donohue, said Tuesday.

Donohue issued the [statement](#), titled "Salon.com Wears Its Bigotry on Its Sleeve," in response to an [excerpt](#) from "The Erotica Project" by Lillian Ann Slugocki, which ran Tuesday in Salon's Sex site. Donohue characterized the piece "Mary Magdalene" as "an obscene portrait of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. With graphic detail, Slugocki depicts them performing oral sex on each other."

To quote from the offending article: "Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God."

Donohue avenged the sacrilege by castigating Salon.com employees for their bottled-water consumption: "The preppy boys and girls at Salon.com represent the lumpenproletarianization of our elites: they have more in common with the pimps and thugs who inhabit this social circle than with anyone else. Save for their bottled water."

Oddly enough, on its Web site the Catholic League describes its [mission](#) as a defender of free speech. "Motivated by the letter and the spirit of the First Amendment, the Catholic League works to safeguard both the religious freedom rights and the free speech rights of Catholics whenever and wherever they are threatened."

Salon.com Sex editor Karen Croft responded to the charges: "I think Christ is sexy." She added that she does not drink bottled water, commenting that it is "too expensive." She filters her own at home. -- **Katharine Mieszkowski** [4:15 p.m. PST, Feb. 6, 2001]

Aliens hack automatic Slashdot software

"Flying Cars Technology Being Used In The PlayStation 2."
"Corel Rewriting Amiga OS In Smalltalk." "Yahoo Rushes To Patch Bug In PostgreSQL." "William Shatner Denies Relationship With Gerbil."

There is an art to the Slashdot headline -- cryptic, abbreviated, full of references to geek icons and sufficiently arcane to bore the technologically challenged. Which is why the [Slashdot Story Generator](#) is so funny: The creators have managed to perfectly satirize the formula, throwing references to Eric Raymond and Stephen Hawking in with futuristic technologies, gratuitous alien sightings, obscure programming languages and zeitgeisty companies.

To wit:

Cisco Makes A Breakthrough In Real Light Sabers: ralfthedog says "Looks like we'll be seeing a lot more products incorporating real light sabers technology from Cisco. Their researchers just perfected designs that put them light years ahead of Compaq. No word on when the first products will be released, but it looks like it's really happening this time." What implications this has on my plans for decapitating zombies are still unclear at this time.

The Slashdot Story Generator was created by the witty humor magazine [BBSpot](#). As its producers themselves describe their creation: "Developed in PHP and utilizing the powerful and flexible Kozzmo Generation Engine (including random typos for Added Realism(tm) coming soon), the SSG removes the annoying wait between Slashdot story postings. Just press the convenient 'Next Story' button and you'll get the rush you desire when you see your chance to make the 'First Post!'"

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. -- **Janelle Brown**
[3 p.m. PST, Feb. 6, 2001]

Amazon to failing dot-coms: Panhandle here

"You CAN save a dot-com. This one." So begs the [SatireWire](#) home page.

It has come to this: Virtual begging for the cash-flow-challenged dot-com, courtesy of Amazon.com. Yes, we're all weary of watching our favorite Web sites bite the dust, but are we really ready to open our wallets to save them?

Amazon.com hopes so. It has launched a new program with the ever-so-earnest name [Amazon Honor System](#).

Fans of sites like [SETI](#) and [Modern Humorist](#) can now click

to donate up to \$50 to their favorite charity-case dot-com.

The catch: Amazon.com takes a 15 percent cut of every transaction, plus a 15-cent transaction fee. Just think of it as a way to subsidize a money-losing e-tailer while supporting your favorite content or community site.

We can just hear the bean-counting executives at struggling dot-coms cheer: "Manna from heaven! A new revenue stream!" But if [Stephen King](#) couldn't make a go of it with donations for his serial novel "The Plant," then who's to say that the likes of SETI can sustain themselves by passing the virtual hat? [Blogger](#) tried to do the same, using PayPal -- which takes a much smaller cut -- but it wasn't enough to save the cash-strapped site, which just ran out of money.

Still, by early afternoon, the first day of the Amazon Honor System program, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence had already collected \$269 from 21 fans who chipped in. And these days, \$269 is nothing to turn up your nose at. --
Katharine Mieszkowski [12:30 p.m. PST, Feb. 6, 2001]

Etoy vs. eToys: Who will be the next Goliath?

Now that eToys has announced that it's going [out of business](#) on April 6, you might expect [etoy](#) to be jumping for joy. After all, the Swiss pranksters spent over \$100,000 just trying to defend themselves from the Amazon-funded retailer, which sued more than a year ago for control of the etoy.com domain name. But alas, [one slain Goliath](#), etoy fears, will only make room for another.

"To think we're trampling on their grave is naive," says Zai, a member of the group, speaking from Zurich. "Someone will buy the name. And that someone will probably be bigger and tougher than eToys."

The group -- which started using the name in 1994, before eToys sprung onto the Web -- first started to fear for its nemesis' life back in November, when eToys gave up on negotiations over how to share the domain. "It was the moment that they realized what their numbers were," Zai says. "They realized they weren't going to make it." Now, Zai fears that when the creditors come calling, looking for something to sell, the first thing they'll aim for is the domain name.

"Since it's the only thing that's worth anything," Zai says, "someone will sell toys under this URL next November and December. It's simply too famous."

Still, don't expect etoy to back down. Zai and his cohorts made a name for themselves by mobilizing the Web in support of the etoy cause. This David may be small, but etoy is nimble, experienced in the ways of war, and determined to keep slinging stones.

"We will fight with everything we can to make sure that those who are trying to maximize profits will not make things worse for us," Zai says. It doesn't matter who it is, eToys or someone else." -- **Damien Cave** [12 p.m. PST, Feb. 6, 2001]

Women.com: Sold to the lowest bidder

The news was hardly surprising: Considering how far stocks of the competing women's portals have fallen lately, and how similar their products were, consolidation (or worse) was inevitable. So when [iVillage](#) announced Monday that it was acquiring [Women.com](#), "creating the world's largest and most comprehensive destination for women on the Web," our first reaction was a shrug.

After all, having watched the women's sites race to the [lowest common denominator](#) in pursuit of profits in the last years, it's difficult to feel remorse for the loss of Women.com's (marginal) independence.

But just how far did Hearst have to go to dump its money-losing investment? After all, the media giant owned 46 percent of the floundering portal, which publishes many Hearst women's magazines online. Apparently, it was so eager to get rid of the stone around its neck that it actually *paid* [iVillage](#) to take it away. As part of the deal, Hearst will purchase \$15 million to \$21 million in "production and advertising services" from [iVillage](#) over the next three years, *and* [iVillage](#) has the "opportunity" to make a \$20 million investment in [iVillage](#).

This is hardly a new strategy for Hearst, however, which recently [paid](#) the Fang family \$60 million to buy the San Francisco Examiner. Is this any way to run a business? What's next? Anyone out there willing to accept \$30 million to take *Cosmopolitan* off Hearst's hands? -- **Janelle Brown** [4:15 p.m. PST, Feb. 5, 2001]

New life for dead dot-com business cards

Attention, laid off dot-commers! Before you burn a stack of your business cards in an ironic, cathartic funeral pyre, consider this: Those useless tokens of your former job could be the stuff of art.

The Bay Area art group [fAMOUS](#) is collecting business cards from sacked dot-commers for their first art show called "dot-gone." So far, it has about 30 cards from recently departed employees, including former workers from NBCi, Pets.com, marchFIRST, MasterKey, More.com and Marketvibe.com.

One of the artists, Jamie Michael, who counts herself among the recently laid off, says: "It will be a memorial sort of thing. We have these cards, and that's all we have left. The phone numbers don't work. The people don't work there. It's just kind of ridiculous. But the people are real people."

The business card piece will be part of the mixed-media [show](#) at the [Lair of the Minotaur Gallery](#) in San Francisco, which will include video, painting, sculpture and installation.

The five artists of fAMOUS met as undergrads at the University of California at Berkeley. "The dot-com 'theory' was a dream for smart kids coming out of school," says Michael. "Young work environments that paid well for left-field thinking. But the rules of business haven't changed. This was just a dead-end detour." She's hard at work on a mural about the NASDAQ.

Justin Chao, another former dot-commer in the group, says that the hyped dot-com boom and bust was all about perception: "Amazon.com was losing money three years ago. It's still losing money. It will still be losing money six months from now. The only thing that changes is people's thoughts."

And maybe your now-useless business cards will help inspire people to think in a different way. -- **Katharine Mieszkowski** [3 p.m. PST, Feb. 2, 2001]

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