

Think fast.

Especially if you value your freedom. Because Microsoft's goal is to control the future of information delivery. Not only does Microsoft have most Netizens' desktops, it now has a piece of the wires on which their data travels from computer to Internet, with its \$1 billion investment in Comcast's cable modems and its acquisition of WebTV. Today Microsoft is influencing the very ways that data is exchanged on the internet, the ways it's presented, viewed, created, and distributed.

HE CHEATS.

He uses a trade organization to crack down on foreign software companies that pirate a variety of software programs—and then drops charges against them if they sign deals exclusively with Microsoft.

HE PULLS STRINGS.

Gates and Microsoft want you to think they quietly write code up in Redmond, Washington, wishing only to work in peace instead of being harassed by Janet Reno and her cronies. Hardly. In a relatively short time, Microsoft has built a startling network of political heavyweights to bully Congress. The result: a \$1.7 billion tax cut Microsoft helped push through in 1997.

HE LIES.

He says he'll stick to software, but he's already bought everything from Leonardo da Vinci to WebTV, and he'll need to keep buying—with an unprecedented grab for cross-industry capital—in order just to maintain and protect his empire. Meanwhile, he's going to be learning more—intimately more—about you in the process, to figure out how you fit into his empire.

HE BUYS.

In order for Bill Gates to fulfill his dream—outlined in Mien Kampf, er, The Road Ahead, and provide any kind of information electronically—music, books, movies—you name it, he will need to buy the rights to said material—making it unavailable except through Microsoft Software.



HE KNOWS.

Accessing Microsoft's collection of City-Guide web sites, known as Sidewalk, allow them to use whatever information they can get about you in any way they want. This information can include name, email address, physical address, and whatever material you access on SideWalk, from movie times to personals.

HE NEEDS.

To make all this possible, Gates needs ownership on a scale heretofore unknown in human history. That he will likely use his assets not for malevolent ends but to abet the human weakness for endless self-amusement should in no way reduce our concern. This suggests that the costs of confronting Gates head-on will be high. And it isn't enough to prevent Gates from, say, controlling the Web, because the Web may only be a way station to something more powerful.

SO WHY DOES BILL GATES HAVE A PIE ON HIS FACE?

Because someone figured this out. And unless you want Bill Gates becoming more powerful than anyone else in human history, you should become informed. Fast. Or else you might have to drink Microsoft Beer™, and like it. Double-plus-ungood, Comrade. For more information, read the Mother Jones Jan/Feb 98 cover story, or consult the archives at <http://www.motherjones.com>



Think Independant.