



Free Press Viewpoint

The iPad is not the iRevolution

This week, Apple unveiled their iPad, a touch-screen device larger than an iPod designed for easy reading of documents. You can also run many applications from games, read books and much more all on this handy little device about the thickness of a magazine and with the surface size of an open paperback book.

Ignoring jokes about the name, it is a pretty cool gadget. You can read books full size and use a finger on the touch screen to turn a page just like you would in real life. And it's an Apple product, and they usually make quality gadgets.

One downside is that it has a hefty \$500 price tag, and that's just the basic model. A bit much if you're a casual gadget person.

Even more interesting is that a product announcement like this made national and international headlines. On the day it was unveiled, it was the top story on CNN, BBC, all the acronym networks. They all claimed it would revolutionize the way people read and interact with the Internet. It's hard to take those claims seriously though, since people make them with any new piece of technology. Sometimes they're right, but for the most part revolutions in how we do things happen very slowly and go unrecognized until after the fact.

Apple is hardly the first to develop a slate (a small touch-screen computer without a keyboard). Slates were one of the big attractions at the Consumer Electronics Show earlier in January, with companies like Lenovo, Microsoft and Dell all getting into the game. E-readers (electronic devices that allow you to read a lot of books or other documents, but don't do much else) have also been around for a while. Amazon.com keeps putting out releases saying how wonderful and popular its Kindle book reader is. Judge that one for yourself.

One of the most interesting devices from a media perspective is the e-newspaper reader. At the electronics show, a company called Plastic Logic came out with a nifty one called the Que. It's a thin, flat screen, solely for reading newspapers electronically. The columnists covering the show, of course, proclaimed that this would make paper newspapers a thing of the past. But like the iPad announcements, we don't quite buy it.

For one thing, it may be convenient, but it won't save you money. Once you fork over the cash for one of these readers — and so far there's no such thing as a cheap one — you still have to buy each book or newspaper individually. For another, staring at a computer screen is not the same as staring at a printed page. It does different things to the eyes and while some of us have no trouble reading from computer screens, it is uncomfortable for many over long periods.

In addition, it's not guaranteed that every book or newspaper you want would be available on these devices. As far as newspapers go, each individual newspaper would have to set up to offer the service, and that's a hassle that a lot of smaller papers just wouldn't want to bother with. Take *the Colby Free Press* for instance. While iPad sales are going to go through the roof, there's little doubt that only a very small percentage of our readership will get one, and fewer would want to use it to view the paper. It just wouldn't pay to offer service. Plus, many people, especially in the older generations, just plain prefer a paper copy.

So go ahead and order your iPad or other slate. It's going to be fun, no doubt, just don't expect the revolution to show up with it. —Kevin Bottrell



'Patriotism' means blanket approval?

As much as I hate to admit it, conservatives' definition of what it means to be patriotic has triumphed over any attempts by liberals and progressives to redefine the word.

This is hardly the first time conservatives have won the battle to shape what America is and should be. But what many of today's conservatives consider patriotism has always disturbed me. They seem to frown upon anyone who questions the morality of American foreign policy.

Many critics of our country's foreign policies are denounced as anti-American or are portrayed as card-carrying members of the far left. Since I'm critical of some past and present American foreign policy decisions, I would like to try and explain myself to those who disagree with my political views. I'm not asking you to agree with me, just to try and understand where I'm coming from.

It's not that I think America is an evil force trying to impose their will on the rest of the world. There have been many times when I silently thanked the American soldiers who fought in World War II and helped save the world from the horrors of Nazism and fascism. And I admit there are times when the left gets so obsessed with America's past and present sins that they forget the times the American military has acted as a force for good in the world.

But the idea that we have always been on the side of freedom is contradicted by reality. The fact that conservatives promote the idea that ignoring reality is patriotic is a little dangerous. One thing that keeps democratic countries from becoming totalitarian is the citizens in free countries have access to information unavailable in repressive nations. Unlike those under dictatorships in Myanmar and Zimbabwe, the American public is not only privy to government decisions, they are able to criticize them



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

without having to live in fear of jail, torture or death. But the critical role the public plays as watchdog of the government is severely weakened when ideology trumps fact.

Despite the angry rhetoric of some on the right, most people suspicious of American foreign policy are not steadfast opponents of military intervention. Most progressives' frustrations with U.S. foreign policy are based on the double standards the government expects everyone to ignore.

For example, if you look at our past and present use of military force in places like Iraq, Haiti and Panama, it's hard to ignore the fact that the people we have fought or are currently fighting against were once our allies. When they were allies, they were just as repressive as they are now as enemies. Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega was a corrupt, repressive force in his country and a player in the global drug trade while he was on the CIA's payroll, but these same traits were used to defend the U.S. invasion of Panama and Noriega's capture in 1989. Is it really patriotic to ignore the about-face our government made in their treatment of Noriega? Why was the CIA willing to work with this guy to begin with?

While it's true that U.S. military intervention in Haiti helped restore democracy in 1994, it is also true that many of those we had to force out of power had been on the CIA payroll. U.S. troops deserve the utmost credit for restoring democracy, but why was the CIA working

with the most brutal people in Haiti before the invasion?

There is no doubt that the removal of Saddam Hussein was a victory for the people of the Iraq and all freedom-loving people, but should his overthrow and eventual death whitewash the American government's support for him throughout the 1980s? During the time when he received U.S. support he invaded Iran, used chemical weapons on his own people and Iranians, and killed thousands in his own country.

Most progressives want a form of patriotism that still takes pride in the American military's role in World War II, our government's opposition to communism during the Cold War, and our intelligence agencies' and army's courageous work to prevent terrorist attacks today. I have criticized the CIA, but I know they do very dangerous work that prevents attacks we don't hear about because they never happened. But I don't think its unpatriotic to ask if limits shouldn't be placed on who the CIA can recruit and what they do.

I respect the U.S. army's role in protecting our country, but I don't think its unpatriotic to push for a more inclusive foreign policy where regular soldiers and citizens are privy to all the reasons our government wants to go to war. I don't think a small cabal of people in Washington should be able to declare war without providing the American people with the same information they have access to. Admitting past mistakes and adopting a more thoughtful form of patriotism would only make our country look more legitimate in the eyes of the world.

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Constitution stretched by current policy

To the Editor:

I'd like to ask some very serious questions of the American people. I'd like you to think long and hard. Search your hearts. Seriously think back to what you learned in grade school.

Think about political discussions you overheard or were privileged to be a part of as you grew up. Think about all that, then consider the following questions:

- Have any of our past presidents and/or Congresses ever defied and overstepped the boundaries specifically set for them by the Constitution?

- Why are we, the taxpayers, letting our attorney general hold hearings and trials for terrorists captured on a foreign battlefield?

- Why would we give them the same privileges as an American citizen? It makes no sense when they can be tried and convicted at Gitmo and our armed forces have the ability to do it. It would save millions of dollars of taxpayer money.

As far as saying they are "entitled" to have a trial on American soil, be given their Miranda Rights, "lawyer up" and be judged by their peers in front of a judge, no, they are not! They are not American citizens, for crying out loud! They weren't even on U.S. soil; they were caught on the battlefield, killing U.S. soldiers. U.S. citizens.

Speaking of entitlements, this "Obamacare"



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

health care bill will cost the taxpayer billions by the time it is fully set in motion. I stand by the Constitution's 10th Amendment. The federal government has no business trying to manage anyone's health!

Please, please, do not give up your right to choose your doctor or your insurance plan, because it will come to that. Americans have always cherished their freedom. Now the boneheads in Washington won't listen to their constituents and say, "It will be best for all of you," then shove it down our throats. That does not mean it's best for any of us!

And by the way, there are provisions in the health-care bill that the government will provide abortions to any woman if she wants one. How is that supported in the Constitution?

I don't want to see another generation lost to government policies that are so far from the original intent of the Constitution that guarantees in its Preamble:

"We the People of the United States, ... establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

I know some of you will swear up and down that the words "general welfare" mean the U.S. government has a duty to make sure you have everything you need. Wrong. It means the well-being of the United States as a whole is protected from outside influences of other types of government or attacks on our soil.

The Declaration of Independence speaks of "The Creator." If you believe in God, that is who they referred to. If you're not a believer in God, then maybe it's a Higher Power that is unexplainable.

The Patriots of 1776 are but a memory in the history books, but that does not mean that what they fought and died for should vanish forever. It should make us look back over our United States history and say, "I'm proud to be an American. I will fight the good fight for my belief that America will once again be a great nation."

Right now, God is our best hope for reuniting that spirit of truth in and with freedom as He inspired it so long ago.

Jari Skiles, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

