

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

In the court of the ICANN Sun King

A good article by John Levine on Why he left the ICANN At Large Advisory Committee resonated with me on a few levels, having decided fairly early on in CIRA Board career that I wouldn't be sticking around for a second term.

I've had very minimal exposure to the inner workings of ICANN, as a nobody on the outside they just seem like an utterly impotent hackey-sack ball that gets hooped around by Verisign and the US DOC and occasionally passes policy that directly affects my livelihood. But otherwise they don't stop anybody from throwing the rules to the wind. (Fortunately, the Register Fly debacle affords them an opportunity to "look tough" even tho this disaster has been a year in the making and they've done nothing.)

Back to the article, where my favorite description about the machinations of ICANN is

"After going to a few ICANN meetings I found that ICANN operates along the lines of the court of the Sun King. ICANN's processes are hopelessly opaque, and short of a lawsuit, the way to get something done is through personal connections with staff and particularly with board members. As a result, ICANN's meetings involve a mob swirling around the ICANN board, and to some degree the staff, trying to get face time."

My minimal exposure was a brief stint as the alternate task force member appointed by the Registrars' Constituency to the GNSO Whois Privacy Task Force. It involved an ICANN meeting in Montreal (which I was there for anyway because CIRA was hosting the meeting during the AGM) and a few teleconferences.

The whole thing was traumatic and scarred me mentally. The thing that struck me about it all was the relentless pursuit of agenda promotion. You weren't allowed in the door if you didn't have one, and if you didn't spend all your waking time cutting side-deals and "whispering-up" your talking points, a bouncer would ask you to leave. It was awful.

It was a lot like how I imagine the political process to work.

Posted by Mark Jeftovic in Tongue-in-cheek at 13:42