

TED STEVENS, THE “TOOBZ”, AND THE IDIOCY OF THE INTERNET

Alright, this will be a fairly short post, but I would like to remind people of some things. Namely, regarding Ted Stevens. As background, Marcy wrote a serious, and important, post on the Trumps



Organization’s curious, and semi-hilarious, use of Microsoft. And, yes, Marcy is right, it was amazingly stupid. From clackers whining that Hillary Clinton had insecure internet. If it was not so stupid, it would be extra laughable.

But I want to cut back to something different. In comments, Rayne Loled at Ted Stevens and, then, a relatively new commenter (like just today as far as I can tell), “CJ” chimed in with:

Bizarrely, it’s not an entirely bad metaphor, though that’s probably accidental on his part. See, e.g., Andrew Blum’s “Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet”.

This is bunk. Blum, and his book, tried to make hay off of Stevens, and at his expense, but without giving him much of his due, nor acknowledging how the “tubes” of the internet falsely allowed the demonization of Stevens and cheerleader his prosecution. A prosecution that

turned out to be false and craven. In a review in the New York Times in 2012, Dwight Garner noted:

Reading this, you wish Mr. Stevens, who died in an airplane crash in 2010, were here to savor it. "Inside those tubes (by and large) are glass fibers," the author continues. "Inside those fibers is light. Encoded in that light is, increasingly, us."

That is exactly right, although Blum never really went deeper into the fraud by the Department of Justice that took Ted Stevens down before his untimely demise by plane crash.

So, as a bit of retrospective:

Say what you will about Ted Stevens, and much of that may be fair. But what was done to him at the end was wrong and a travesty. And the DOJ could not even deal with that then. Much less the pervasive and consuming wrong that is at hand today with Bill Barr and the DOJ he now administers.

For anybody that does not remember just how egregious and blatant the government/DOJ action against Ted Stevens was, here is one of my takes from 2008, and yet another in followup, from 2012.

You can joke about Toobz Stevens, and we have here before, but what happened to him was a complete travesty of justice. And there are serious lessons from that to keep in mind today. Without the "toobz" of the internet, I am not sure the reckless and false case against Stevens could have ever made it as far as it did. There is great irony in that, and it is a lesson that ought remain remembered, not just joked about.

That was a different, and in popular lore, more benevolent and honest era. So, what do you think are the odds for far worse from Trump and Barr? Somewhere, Ted Stevens has an idea.