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Technology as an Agent of Popular Participation in Government

After last month's economic analysis and call for suggestions, I have a more realistic understanding of the readership of the Old Country Lawyer column. As only the Publisher responded to my request for suggestions, I conclude that nobody reads the column other than the Publisher, and that likely because she has the duty to cut it from my email and paste it into the Blue Print format.

So I am relieved of responsibility - even if I produce a dissertation about some potentially-dangerous proposal, the absence of readership should minimize any damage that might cause. Talk about Freedom of Expression. Now let's see how far I can go, knowing that it will be published but not read.

I will now offer a lengthy excerpt from a speech by a famous Congressman about advances in communications technology improving the World:

"A chief distinction of the present day is a community of opinions, and knowledge, amongst men, in different nations, existing in a degree heretofore unknown. Knowledge has, in our time, triumphed and is triumphing over distance, over differences in language, over diversity of habits, over prejudice and over bigotry. . . The whole world is becoming a common field of intellect to act in. Energy of mind, genius, power, wherever it exists, may speak out in any tongue, and the world will hear it.

"There is a vast commerce of ideas. There are marts and exchanges for intellectual discoveries, and a wonderful fellowship of these individual intelligences which make up the mind and opinion of the age.

". . . the diffusion of knowledge, so astounding in the last half century, has rendered innumerable minds, variously gifted by nature, competent to be competitors, or fellow-workers, on the theatre of intellectual operation.

"Under the influence of this rapidly increasing knowledge, the people have begun, in all forms of government, to think, and to reason, on affairs of state. Regarding government as an institution for the public good, they demand a knowledge of its operation, and a participation in its existence.."

Hon. Daniel Webster (Whig-N.H.), on the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1825.

It is reassuring to be reminded that brilliant folks have thought the increase in availability of information due to technological advance, will bring meaningful participation into government, for almost two hundred years.

- Christopher J. Mallin, Old Country Lawyer