NEWSANALYSIS

The Linux Voice view on what's going on in the world of Free Software.

Opinion

Birth of a party

Calm down Mr Farage: there's some actual politics happening in Brussells!

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As society changes, so can European-level politics. The formation of the European Pirate Party this weekend was thus an event of unique interest. Responding to the emergence of the meshed society, geeks of all flavours realised there was no one speaking up for the reality they saw.

The treatment of the Pirate Bay was the catalyst. Instead of considering its existence as civil disobedience arising from market failure, politicians sided with the legacy media intermediaries in treating it as organised crime akin to drug dealing or currency counterfeiting.

The result was outrage, at least in the more socially coherent communities of Scandinavia and Germany. Political parties formed almost spontaneously in those countries, dedicated to bringing about a just society for the digital age. The smirks of derision of the incumbent politicians in those countries faded as they discovered this was not just a protest movement but was electorally viable. In 2009 Christian Engström was elected representing Sweden in the European Parliament, as was the brilliant Amelia Andersdotter. Then in

Germany, the party gained seats in various elections. The movement spread, chaotic rabble though it often appeared, until this year it became clear it was present throughout Europe.

Which brings us to here. This weekend, the grassroots movement from all of Europe assembled in Brussels for the next stage of organisation. Some present were concerned that the whole new thing was getting too much like the old thing it wanted to replace. But those few bit their lip and savoured the moment as a rabble of smart geeks (many an open source committer among them) became the newest political party in Europe.

Bright beginnings

Not all was shiny. The opening keynotes for the event were frankly disappointing for an outsider, with little sign of a coherent intellectual framework being propounded by the speakers and no speech from Amelia Andersdotter, the clear leader of the party at this juncture. But there were flashes of promising insight. Keynote speaker (and later Plenary chair) Julia Rede said "I want a Europe more like the internet -- connected, collaborative and a community of peers." This is a visionary statement, which could provide a prototype for a policy framework.

Rede also recognised that a Pirate Party needs to be more than just a movement comprising Linux sysadmins, as well as tackling current issues like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): "The greatest fear of TTIP is that it will raise corporations to the same status as states". She is a candidate in the upcoming

The European Pirate Party was founded in March 2014, and should have a great future.

European Elections and it's clear that the European Pirate Party needs her elected.

And that name. It turns out that people with English as a second language have fewer problems with it, picking up the humour and Disneyesque romance. But the negative implications, both from the real meaning of the word "pirate" and its cynical misuse in connection with unauthorised copyright usage, tend to make it become a slur to many with English as a first language. This doesn't have to be a problem though. It's a word true to the origins of the movement, and there is a historic precedent for adopting the slurs of one's detractors as a name. The Tories did it (the term originally meaning a mugger); before them the Whigs did it; even Christianity did it. With time, the name Pirate Party will become a strength rather than a weakness.

This is not a political movement funded from the deep pockets of corporations or unions. There was no expensive partying, no glitz or glamour, no side meetings funded by sponsors, no exhibition to gain fees. But there was broad attendance from across Europe by party members and supporters of all ages. The Pirate Party is a voice we all need in Europe. Welcome!

> **"The Pirate Party needs to be more than just a movement comprising Linux sysadmins."**

CATCHUP

Summarised: the eight biggest news stories from the last month

1 Windows XP EOL pushing companies to try Linux
It's official: Windows XP is dead. The OS had an incredibly long life, but even Microsoft got sick of supporting it. However, with an estimated 70% of businesses still running at least one XP machine, what can they do? Buy new hardware and upgrade to the UI nightmare that is Windows 8? Or switch to Linux? Well, various surveys are suggesting that between 10 and 30% of businesses are now considering moving to Linux. That's millions of new users coming…

2 Quake III ported to the Raspberry Pi
Hang on – Quake III came out in 1999. So that's hardly impressive, eh? Well, it is when it's part of a $10,000 bounty. In February, Broadcom announced a wealth of documentation for the graphics chip in the Pi, and provided a driver for a similar chip. Then the Raspberry Pi foundation offered $10,000 to the first person to port the driver to the Pi's own GPU and show Quake III runnning silky-smooth on it. Long-time Pi hacker Simon Hall managed it, and bagged the loot.

3 QR codes considered for kernel crash messages
Kernel panic text isn't useful to many people, but if non-technical users could send a QR code containing the information to the relevant developers, that could help everyone.

4 GOG.com announces plan to support Linux
Formerly known as Good Old Games, GOG.com is a rather spiffing site that sells (mainly older) games without DRM and other such horrible nonsense. The company has announced plans to support Linux in the near future, focusing on Ubuntu and Mint, with 100 games in the pipeline. There aren't many other details right now, but for some gamers, it will be one fewer reason to reboot into Windows. Read the full announcement here: **http://tinyurl.com/kcdozjz**

5 Major GnuTLS bug leaves "secure" websites open to eavesdropping
It's easy to become complacent as a Linux user, given the overall reliability and security of the operating system. But vulnerabilities do happen, and now a Red Hat researcher has found a problem with GnuTLS, a library that implements TLS and SSL support for websites. The vulnerability affects certificate verification, potentially showing unsecure, spied-on connections as secure. Distros are scrambling to push out fixed packages.

6 Linus Torvalds refuses to accept any more code from prominent hacker
Linus doesn't mince his words, especially when someone breaks his beloved kernel. Kay Sievers, one of the developers of systemd, managed to bring Linus's blood to a boil over a complication with the "debug" flag on the kernel command line. (As if systemd weren't controversial enough…) "I will not be merging any code from Kay into the kernel" until fixes are made, said Linus. Check out the the full email: **http://tinyurl.com/linusrage**

7 Microsoft Office released for Linux – well, Android
But Android is a flavour of Linux, right? It was an unusually cold day in Hell when Microsoft announced this, but yes, you can now get mini versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint for your Android device. The reviews so far aren't very positive, with users complaining of problems opening desktop Office files. Which is especially ironic, as Microsoft always championed its supposed cross-app and platform file compatibility. Anyway, the suite is also available for iOS.

The Giant Panda
The giant panda, which lives only in China outside of captivity, has captured the hearts of people of all ages across the globe. From their furry black and white body to their shy and docile nature, they are considered one of the most loved animals.

8 $2,400 'Introduction to Linux' course made free
This is jolly generous of The Linux Foundation. Its 'Introduction to Linux' course, previously available for a wallet-bursting $2,400, will soon be freely available for everyone. The Foundation plans to release it as part of a MOOC (Massively Open Online Course), so if you're fairly new to Linux and still trying to fathom your way around the operating system, it could help you enormously. Here's the full text of the announcement: **http://tinyurl.com/lskhx8u**