

What? It's not written down?

I recently attempted to follow up on a story that appeared in the Friday, May 31 issue of *USA Today* when I reached a "Whitewater-Watergate." The newspaper's short story mentioned that Microsoft chairman Bill Gates had met with FCC chairman Reed Hundt. The meeting concerned the software industry's position on ATV. The event was apparently coordinated by the Business Software Alliance.

Following up on the story, I hoped to learn just exactly what the software industry's position was on ATV. I talked with Dianne Smirolido, director of public affairs for the Business Software Alliance. Not only would she not discuss what Gates might have said to Hundt, but she also refused to say what the association was trying to accomplish with the series of meetings that also included key

members of Congress. It seems those meetings were part of the alliance's plan to lobby policymakers on the future of ATV.

When I asked about the association's position on ATV, I was told, "It's not for public consumption."

Okay, I asked, could she tell me what the software industry's position on ATV was or where I might get a copy of it? Her response, "It's not written down."

What? It's not written down? Let me get this straight. The computer industry wants to affect the outcome of the FCC's decision on HDTV and ATV. Computer industry moguls are meeting with the FCC chairman and congressional leaders in "private" meetings, and yet no position papers exist on what those technical aspects are? I'll just bet!

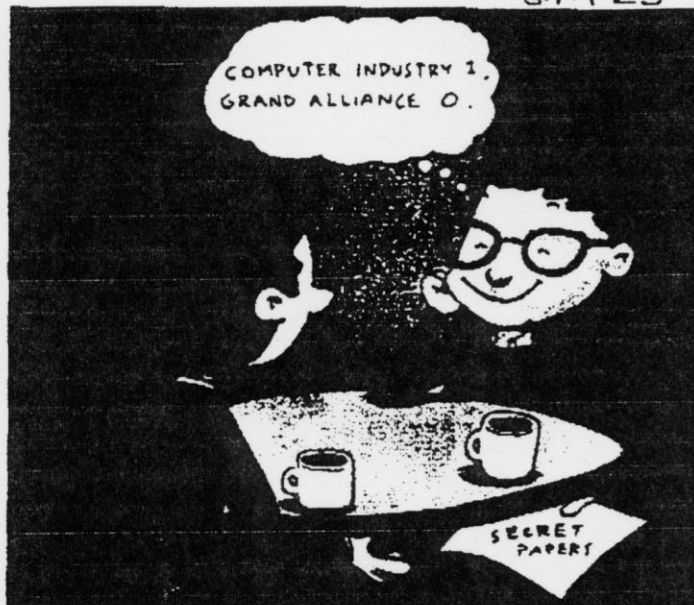
Now I don't subscribe to the theory that there's evil hiding under every rock, not even in Washington. But when major industry figures begin lobbying the FCC and Congress and their positions "are not for public consumption" or "not written down," I begin to wonder. You should wonder too.

I'll be the first to admit that I've given the NAB a tough time when I think it has let the broadcast industry down. But when it comes to ATV, the association has done a pretty good job of expressing its viewpoint and supporting the industry's needs. At least the NAB didn't try any sleight of hand tricks under the guise of "it's not written down."

Hey, I think I know what happened. I'll bet there was an official computer industry position paper on broadcasting and ATV, and Gates probably wrote it. Unfortunately, he accidentally erased it when his mouse skipped and he clicked on *disk format* instead of *document format*.

He should have used the keyboard!

GATES



HUNDT

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