



Top Stories

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Featured story

"Avast ye scurvy file sharers!": Interview with Swedish Pirate Party leader Rickard Falkvinge

The Pirate Party, a new Swedish political party first publicized in January, wants to legalize sharing music, movies, and other copyrighted content using the Internet. Party leader Rickard Falkvinge shares his thoughts about the prospects of the party and the future of copyright law.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Iraqi officials have unconfirmed reports that they have found the bodies of the two U.S. soldiers the American military began looking for at the beginning of this week. The bodies of PFC Kristian Menchaca of Houston, Texas, and PFC Thomas Tucker of

Wikipedia Current Events

Madras, Oregon showed several signs of torture.

•Jack Abramoff scandals: David Safavian, former George W. Bush White House official, is convicted of four felony counts of lying and obstruction related to his dealings with lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

•Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, leaves Sierra Leone for his human rights trial at The Hague.

•Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announces plans to withdraw his country's troops from Iraq. The 600 soldiers had been deployed to Iraq in 2004 to aid in reconstruction and sparked controversy in Japan, as it was the first time Japan had deployed an overseas force since World War II.

•Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinean President Mahmoud Abbas will attend a common meeting later this week.

Paraguay beat Trinidad and Tobago 2-0 in Group B

Paraguay beat Trinidad and Tobago in a match that had no effect on the qualifiers through to the round sixteen of the Fifa World Cup, Tuesday.

Paraguay edged the game from start to finish and got a goal in each half.

Trinidad and Tobago could manage just two shots to trouble Aldo

Bobadilla in the Paraguay net. Kelvin Jack, who started his first Fifa World Cup game, made seven saves.

After 25 minutes Jack was a bystander when Roberto Acuna's freekick was driven hard into the box. Jack's central defender Brent Sancho inadvertently directed the ball goalbound with his head.

The goal that sealed the game for the South Amercians was scored six minutes from time by Nelson Cuevas after he had exchanged passes with Roque Santa Cruz.

The game was notable for being the last appearance for Carlos Gamarra, 35, for his national side. He had played 110 games for Paraguay.

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Sweden score late against England for 2-2 draw in Group B

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Poland win 2-1 against Costa Rica in Group A

Sweden came from behind twice to hold England to an eventful if scrappy 2-2 draw in Koln, Tuesday.

Seconds from time England looked likely to win against a team they had not beaten since 1968. But a long throw from the Swedish left was missed by Sol Campbell and Henrik Larson got a touch that crawled into the far corner of Paul Robinson's net.

For England, who needed at least a draw to top Group B and play Ecuador in the round of sixteen, the drama had began after two minutes. Striker Michael Owen fell to the floor unchallenged apparently badly injured. Owen rolled off the pitch and was

substituted with Peter Crouch.

Sweden pressured an unsettled England early on with ariel balls, from corners especially; these tactics would provide two goals in the second half for the Scandinavians.

England had 55 per cent of ball play in the game and were most dominant before half time.

Sven Goran Eriksson's side had the lead on 33 minutes. Joe Cole on England's left took a clearance on his chest 35 yards from goal. Cole volleyed the ball first time with a high dipping trajectory and a scrambling Andreas Isaksson could only paddle it in off the post.

Joe Cole created the second goal for Steven Gerrard on 85 minutes with a chip to the far post that Gerrard headed powerfully on target. Joe Cole also earned seven fouls for his side, two of which got Swedish players cautioned.

Joe Cole aside, Sven Goran Eriksson's England might have been fortunate to had gone one goal up with five minutes to go as Sweden had many chances in the second half.

The chance Sweden converted to make it 1-1 came on 51 minutes from one of Sweden's 12 corner kicks. Marcus Allback, standing on the left edge of the six yard box, flicked Tobias Linderoth's cross with his head and it looped behind him over the defence and in the net.

An almost identical corner brought a reaction save on to the crossbar from England's Robinson. Sweden captain Olof Melberg then hit the crossbar with an effort. From yet another dangerous Linderoth corner Gerrard cleared the ball off

the England goalline.

Given the Swedish pressure the last minute equaliser perhaps created a fair reflection of the game. It also seemed to expose in the Group B winners a weakness defending high balls. Sweden play the winner of Group A, Germany, in the next phase of the Fifa World Cup.

Italy seeks indictment of US marine

Italian prosecutors have asked a judge to indict a United States soldier for fatally shooting the Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari at a roadblock in Iraq a year ago. The shooting occurred when Calipari was escorting the Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena on her way to Baghdad airport. When their car came under fire from U.S. soldiers at a roadblock, Calipari was fatally shot while trying to shield Sgrena, who was only lightly wounded in the incident.

The circumstances of the shooting are a matter of dispute between Italy and the United States. The U.S. military claims that the car was approaching the checkpoint at high speed, when the troops attempted to signal the car with light signals, aiming a green laser at the windshield and warning shots. When the car failed to slow down, the soldiers shot into the engine of the car.

The Italian government claims that there were no warning signs prior to the shootings. They contest that the car was speeding and that it accelerated after the first round of fire. Moreover they allege that a proper inquiry into the case was impossible since the vehicle was removed and army logs destroyed shortly after the incident.

Italian prosecutors are arguing that the shooting was a "political murder" as Calipari was a civil servant and the shooting damaged Italy's interests. In Italy, murder suspects cannot be tried in absentia unless the murder has political connotations. It is expected to take at least two months for a judge to rule on the indictment request.

The U.S. Embassy in Rome declined to comment.

Germany too hot for Ecuador in Group A

Germany made light of heat and humidity to brush Ecuador aside 3-0 in their final Group A match, Tuesday.

The Germans got goals from Miroslav Klose, whose two tallies put him top of the Fifa World Cup scorers chart with four goals, and Lukas Podolski, his first at the competition.

Luis Suarez's side had 57 per cent of ball possession but Jens Lehmann had to make just two saves from Edison Mendez's and Edwin Tenorio's 35 yard efforts.

After the third goal what there was of a contest ended. This was partly because both sides had already achieved qualification through to the round of sixteen and wanted to conserve energy.

It also was 27 degrees Celcius in the Olympiastadion and together with the 65 per cent humidity playing at a fast pace for a long time was difficult.

The first goal came on three minutes. Bastian Schweinsteiger brought down a cross level with goal and cut it back to Klose. The Polish born striker finished neatly across Cristian Mora from the edge

of the six yard box.

Ecuador were no big threat going forward and had rested Augustin Delgado and Ivan Hurtado, the captain, for the game. Marlon Ayovi was Ecuador's captain against Germany.

Germany's second was set up by Michael Ballack. A brilliant chip surprised two Ecuador defenders, Klose stealed in between them and before the advancing Mora, and, controlling the ball once with his thigh, Klose passed into an empty net.

In the second half there was no hurry to the German game, Ecuador had much of the possession, but Klinsmann's team looked a constant threat on the break. On one such fast attack Bernd Schnieder on the right wing crossed low for Podolski who slid in and tipped the ball toward the far post.

Germany and Ecuador had to wait on the outcome of the Group B match between Sweden and England to know their next opponents. The winner of Group A would play the runner-up in Group B and vice versa.

BBC's famous 'Top of the Pops' programme to be axed

The BBC has confirmed that its famous Top of the Pops music programme is to be axed this summer, after Media Guardian broke the news. The programme began on New Year's Day in 1964 and has featured most of the top bands and artists ever since.

The last show will be on July 30, 2006.

The Controller of BBC Two, Roly Keating, said "I've really enjoyed the last year that Top of the Pops

has transmitted on BBC TWO and the team did a sterling job in revitalising the format for our audience, but we all recognise that the time has come to move on."

Apple plans to sell movies on iTunes

Apple Computer is planning to sell full-length feature films for download via the online iTunes Music Store. The store currently sells digital music tracks, and more recently has begun to sell TV episodes.

Apple executives are in negotiations with film studios to arrange the deal and settle on pricing structures. It is expected that films will retail for around \$9.99 US dollars, although some studios are reported to want to set a higher price.

iTunes is currently by the biggest online retailer of digital music, with its software tightly integrated with the popular iPod line of products. Newer versions of the iPod include a colour screen capable of displaying videos, and so consumers could watch the films on the devices, but it is not yet clear how many people will want to do this.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs is also the largest single shareholder of Disney, which now owns animation studio Pixar, however he could end up playing a wider role within the film industry if iTunes becomes the dominant online distributor.

A full-length TV movie, 'High School Musical' from Disney, is already available on iTunes, suggesting that the technical infrastructure is already in place.

New Zealand PM faults Japan over Whaling Commission vote

New Zealand Prime Minister Helen

Clark has accused Japan of creating a rift between Pacific Countries. She accuses Japan of influencing the voting of some member nations of the Pacific Island Forum at the International Whaling Commission by supplying vast amounts of aid to certain small pacific nations.

New Zealand provides a total of \$23 million a year in aid to three of the six Pacific nations - Kiribati, the Solomons, and Tuvalu. Japan pledged approximately 45 billion yen (NZ \$633 million) in aid for all Pacific nations. New Zealand's annual budget for aiding pacific nations on the other hand totals merely NZ \$173 million.

Miss Clark is quoted as saying "One would hope that over time Japan might reflect on the damage this is doing to [its] relationships around the world" and that it "sprayed a lot of money around" to garner support.

The Prime Minister has ruled out any retaliation against the islands, saying it would not affect any future aid funding.

Tony Blair orders two government jets

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair is set to give the go-ahead for an order of two government jets. One jet is likely to contain 70 seats, whilst the other will be smaller with around 15 seats. Previously the Prime Minister has chartered aircraft or used a royal plane. Both planes would be second hand and not bought outright but leased on a long-term contract.

Government departments, as well as the royal family, who will have first priority, will be able to use the jets, but will have to pay for the full cost of travel.

The story was first reported by BBC correspondent James Hardy, and comes out of a study into ministerial travel costs.

The nicknames 'Blair Force One' and 'Blair Force Two' have already begun to stick. American presidents have traditionally used a special jet called 'Air Force One'.

Twin babies in NZ foster home die of head injuries

The New Zealand police who are investigating the deaths of male twin babies say that they suffered from serious head injuries.

The two babies were named Chris Kahui and Cru Kahui. They lived in a foster home. Child, Youth and Family have removed two other children living at the Mangere home.

The police are investigating a double homicide after the two babies were taken off life support at Starship Hospital, Auckland. The twins were admitted to Starship on Tuesday 13 June. At the time of admission they both suffered from head injuries and one suffered from a broken thigh.

A post-mortem revealed that the babies had died from numerous injuries and brain damage, however police cannot tell if any of the injuries were historical.

New Zealand is ranked third for the rate of child murder in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Australian House of Representatives moves to affirm support for heterosexual marriage

The Australian House of Representatives yesterday discussed as part of private

Member's business a motion moved by Michael Johnson (Australian Liberal Party, Division of Ryan) that sought to affirm and "celebrate" support for marriage "between a man and a woman" and called on the Government to "enact policies that promote and strengthen marriage".Contents

Johnson discussed the earlier amendment to the Australian Marriage Act passed in 2004 which effectively removed the possibility for same-sex marriage, and continued that the failed efforts of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to provide for civil unions within that state was a matter for "grave alarm". Johnson then argued against same-sex marriage saying that "Children come from marriage and families stem from marriage". Johnson criticized the earlier ACT legislation which provided for the dissolution of civil unions by letter to the ACT registrar, stating that "Marriage is a lifelong commitment". However, Johnson went on to discuss the breakdown of marriage and the status of single parents to argue that "surely we all agree that the best environment for the rearing of children is one that has both a mother and a father".

Chris Hayes (Australian Labor Party, Division of Werriwa), took a different stance in speaking to the motion, by discussing how the Government's new industrial relation legislation, WorkChoices, would affect the balancing of work and family life, and called for industrial legislation that would "support families into the future".

Margaret May (Liberal, Division of McPherson), the seconder of the motion, recommenced arguing against same-sex marriage, calling it a "social experiment", and went on to state that "Same sex

relationships, or, indeed, unions should not have the same status as a marriage between a man and a woman". May concluded her speech by calling for support to "services to assist children, young people and adults and to continue sustaining safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships".

John Murphy (Labor, Division of Lowe) also affirmed support for heterosexual marriage, by stating that "Marriage is a natural bond between man and woman, recognized in the vast majority of cultures, whether Christian or otherwise", and that "nature ordains the natural procreative function of man and woman". Murphy also addressed the amendments to the Marriage Act, saying that "this definition is the only valid recognition of our civil laws which correctly reflects the natural law and moral law", and that "You do not even have to believe in anything to draw that conclusion." Murphy however stated in conclusion of his speech that "we are all let down by those who...mask their support for marriage and who employ it as a weapon to attack the many other relationships in our society. Such attacks are unconscionable, unnecessary and unjustified."

Michael Ferguson (Liberal, Division of Bass) reiterated points raised by those before him, but also mentioned the issue of discrimination, saying that "there is different treatment under the law for different relationships. But this is not about discrimination against the individual and it is not designed to be." Ferguson continued to say that "As individual people, homosexual men and women have exactly the same legal rights as you or I".

Craig Emerson (Labor, Division of

Rankin) quoted a House Committee report To have and to hold -- strategies to strengthen marriage and relationships, saying that the report was bipartisan and that "the issue of marriage does enjoy bipartisan support in this parliament", and reiterated Labor's support for the Marriage Amendment which excluded the possibility for same-sex marriage. Emerson concluded his remarks by again tying the impact of the WorkChoices to family life.

No other members of parliament spoke against or criticised the motion before debate was interrupted. The debate is set to continue today.

Interestingly, the Australian Senate is yet to debate a motion moved by the Australian Democrats in order to repeal the Marriage Amendment discussed and institute same-sex marriage. The Australian Greens are also supportive of same-sex marriage, but neither of these parties hold seats in the House.

"Avast ye scurvy file sharers!": Interview with Swedish Pirate Party leader Rickard Falkvinge MP3s for the people? The Pirate Party a new Swedish political party first publicized in January, wants to legalize sharing music, movies, and other copyrighted content using the Internet. What may seem like a doomed effort by a small group of idealists is attracting significant media attention, in part due to a recent police raid on The Pirate Bay, an extremely popular BitTorrent tracker.

The Pirate Bay allows people to download content listed in its database using the BitTorrent protocol (including the latest Hollywood movies or computer

games) and has gained something of an international cult status, in part for its public and irreverent responses to legal threats received from copyright lawyers of major corporations. The site was reopened days after the raid on Dutch servers (but is now back in Sweden again). Rickard Falkvinge, leader of the Pirate Party, argues that regardless of the legal outcome in the case, the web site demonstrates that copyright law in its current form is not sustainable.

Adopting the moniker of the maligned "Internet pirates", the party argues for drastically limiting the scope and enforcement of copyright law, abolishing patent law, and protecting privacy in what it sees as a "control and surveillance society" (party principles). The party is hoping to garner enough votes in the September election to become a small but important faction in the next Swedish parliament. Rickard Falkvinge found some time in between interviews and party work to answer our questions.

There are rumours that the Swedish government was indirectly acting on behalf of the U.S. MPAA in shutting down the site. Do you feel that your government is beholden to U.S. interests?

Oh, the MPAA said so themselves in a press release, it's more than a rumor. Check their press release "Swedish authorities sink Pirate Bay".

And yes, this particular fact has caused something of an uproar in Sweden. It's widely believed that Swedish authorities were more or less ordered by a foreign power to act forcefully against an entity that was in, at worst, a legal gray area according to Swedish law. The raid must have boosted your

recognition. How many members do you currently have, and how successful has your fundraising effort been so far?

Our member count is at 6540, no, 6541, no wait, 6543... well, you get the picture. Our members register themselves on our website after paying the membership fee electronically, which helps reduce our admin load considerably.

Fundraising brought in 108,000 SEK [Ed.: approx. 14,700 USD or 11,600 EUR], enough to buy 3 million ballots, which is some kind of at-least-we're-not-starving minimum. We're not full, but we're not starving, either. Following the raid on the Pirate Bay, we have received another 50K in donations. My sincere thanks to everybody who wants to help out; we are now looking into getting more ballots to make sure we don't run out on election day. (10 million ballots was our initial full-score aim.)

Do you think you will be able to cover future expenses such as radio and television ads?

Following the raid on the Pirate Bay, and our tripling of the member roster, we don't need advertising. :-) We've been mentioned almost every news hour across all channels on national television in the last week.

Also, the established parties have now started to turn, following our success. Parties representing almost half of the elected parliament are now describing today's copyright situation as not working. They still don't understand why, though, they are just echoing what we say without understanding what the words mean. We'll get around to teaching them - them and the

voters alike.

This might be hard for people not following the Swedish media to grasp, but we have made a big splash. Today, our Minister of Justice was quoted as saying that he's open to changes to copyright laws that would make file-sharing legal, with the headline "Bodstrom (his name) flip-flops about file sharing." Immediately underneath were the Pirate Party's comments to his suggestions. Let's take that again: when a minister makes a statement about file sharing, media calls us for comments, and publishes them next to that statement. That's how big we have become since the raid on the Pirate Bay.

The Minister of Justice later denied having made that statement to the press that reported it.

We will never be able to pay for television ads, the way I see it. Unless a very wealthy donor comes on stage. (If any such person is reading this, we have planned how to spend up to \$375,000 in a cost-efficient way up until the elections, on the chance that donations appear. That spending does still not include any TV ads.)

Are you aware of similar initiatives in other countries?

Some are trying, but none have achieved the necessary momentum and critical mass that we have. We expect that momentum to happen once we get into Swedish Parliament and show that it can be done.

[Ed.: A United States variant of the party was recently launched.]

The name "Pirate Party" seems to identify the party with what is currently defined as a crime:

piracy of software, movies, music, and so on. Will a name like "Pirate Party" not antagonize voters, given that the label is so negatively used? How about potential allies abroad who argue for a more balanced copyright regime, such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation or Creative Commons?

Oh, it is a crime. That's the heart of the problem! The very problem is that something that 20% of the voters are doing is illegal by punishment of jail time. That's what we want to change. Where the established parties are saying that the voters are broken, we are saying it's the law that is broken.

Besides, it's a way of reclaiming a word. The media conglomerates have been pointing at us and calling us pirates, trying to make us somehow feel shame. It doesn't work. We wear clothes saying "PIRATE" in bright colors out on the streets. Yes, we are pirates, and we're proud of it, too.

Also, the term is not that negative at all in Sweden, much thanks to the awesome footwork of the Pirate Bureau, who have been working since 2003 to educate the public.

If you are elected, and have the opportunity to become part of the next government of Sweden, do you intend to focus only on the issues in your platform (IP law and privacy)?

Our current plan is to support the government from the parliament, but not be part of it. If we're part of it, that means we get a vested interest to not overthrow it, which puts us in a weaker position if they start going against our interests.

Overall, our strategy is to achieve the balance of power, where both

the left and right blocks need our votes to achieve a majority, and then support the issues of whichever government that agrees to drive our issues the strongest. Basically, we sell our votes on other issues to the highest bidder in exchange for them driving ours.

Have you already made any contacts in Swedish politics? *Contacts... I'm not sure what you mean. Several of us have been shaking hands with some of the established politicians, particularly in the youth leagues, if that's what you mean.*

I was thinking along the lines of exploring possible modes of cooperation with established political parties or are you already taken seriously?

We are taken seriously by most of the youth leagues and by at least one of the represented parties. In particular, which is what counts, we are now taken seriously by national media. However, we can't tie contacts that explore modes of cooperation quite yet â since our strategy depends on holding the balance of power, we need to not express a preference for whom we'd like to cooperate with, or we'd put ourselves in a weaker bargaining position.

What is your position on moral rights, as recognized by European Union copyright laws: the right of attribution, the right to have a work published anonymously or pseudonymously, and the right to the integrity of the work. Do you think these rights should be preserved?

We safeguard the right to attribution very strongly. After all, what we are fighting for is the intent of copyright as it is described in the US constitution: the promotion of culture. Many

artists are using recognition as their primary driving force to create culture.

Publishing anonymously or pseudonymously happens every day on the Internet, so no big deal there either.

The right to integrity, however, is an interesting issue. We state that we are for free sampling, meaning you can take a sound that I made for my tune and use it in your own tunes, or for that matter, a whole phrase. That's partially in line with today's copyright law on derivative works; as long as you add your own creative touch to a work, you get your own protection for the derivation. We want to strengthen that right.

You might want to consider the alternative. In the 50s and 60s, a lot of rock and roll bands started doing covers of old classical music. This would almost certainly have been considered to violate the integrity of the original artist - and was considered to do so by many - but in the eyes of many others, it was instead great new culture of a previously unseen form and shape.

So I don't have a definite answer on the integrity issue. While I am leaning towards the promotion of new culture taking precedence over a limitation right, there may be unconsidered cases.

Do you feel that trademark law is adequate as it is?

Yes. We have not seen any hidden costs to trademarks that outweigh the benefits of reducing transaction costs on a market where seller and buyer are not personally acquainted.

How do you intend to deal with EU treaties which define certain legal

frameworks for the protection of intellectual works? *What can they do? Fine us? Send us an angry letter?*

Come on, countries need to think more like corporations. If the fine is less than the cost to society, which it is in this case, then the right thing to do is to accept the fine with a polite "thank you".

Actually, national media just called me about this very question; the Department of Justice has stated that we can't allow file sharing, as it would break international treaties. My response was that it is more important to not have 1.2 million Swedes criminalized, than it is to avoid paying a penalty fee.

Do you think that weaker intellectual property laws would lessen the amount of products released in Sweden by foreign companies, such as Hollywood studios?

As long as they believe that they will have a revenue here that exceeds the cost of operations, they will keep coming here. Anything else would be wrong from a corporate standpoint.

Besides, you need to remember what we are doing is to change the map according to what reality looks like. We do not want to change people's behavior. We want to change the law so it reflects what the world actually looks like.

So, as they apparently make a profit today, I expect that to continue.

Do you feel that the music industry in its current form will still be needed in a world where non-commercial copying is permitted? *It's not so much if they are needed where non-commercial*

copying is permitted, rather if they are needed when they're not necessary any more to be the middle man between consumer and artist.

The music industry will lose its current chokepoint, because they don't add any value to the end product any longer. They will probably survive as a service bureau for artists, but they will not be able to control distribution.

It's actually quite simple: if they get their act together and provide a service that people want to buy, they will remain. If not, they will vanish. Today, they have legislated that people must buy their service regardless of whether it adds value or not, and that's not gonna hold in the long term.

Why fight against intellectual property laws, instead of focusing your energy on creating freely licensed content, such as Creative Commons films or open source software?

I want to raise the issue a level, to show that it's not about payment models or what level of control the copyright holder chooses to exert over his or her work.

Let me put it this way: we have achieved the techical possibility of sending copyrighted works in digital, private communications. I can send a piece of music in e-mail to you, I can drop a video clip in a chat room. That technology is not going away, leaving us with two choices.

So if copyright is to be enforced if you are to tax, prohibit, fee, fine, or otherwise hinder the transmission of copyrighted works in private communications, the only way to achieve that is to have all private communications constantly monitored. It's really

that large.

Also, this is partly nothing new. We've been able to do this since the advent of the Xerox copier - you could photocopy a poem or a painting and put it in a letter in the mail. Again, the only way to discover or stop that would have been for the authorities to open all letters and check their content.

So we're at a crossroads here. Either we, as a society, decide that copyright is the greater value to society, and take active steps to give up private communications as a concept. Either that, or we decide that the ability to communicate in private, without constant monitoring by authorities, has the greater value - in which case copyright will have to give way.

My choice is clear.

The Pirate Bay was shut down and re-opened days later on a Dutch server. According to a Swedish newspaper report, traffic has doubled since then. How long do you think the cat and mouse game will continue?

Until one of two things happen: The authorities realize they can't enforce laws that require monitoring all private communications, especially given the large international level of grassroots support, or [they] actually start monitoring all private communications.

Today in History

- 1734 - A black slave known as Marie-Joseph Angélique was tortured and then hanged in New France.
- 1788 - New Hampshire ratified the U.S. Constitution and was admitted as the 9th U.S. state.
- 1813 - Laura Secord set out to warn British forces of an

- impending American attack at Queenston, Ontario.
- 1864 - Maori Wars: The Tauranga Campaign ended.
- 1985 - Greenland officially adopted its own flag, adding support to its independence movement.
- 2000 - The controversial amendment known as Section 28 was repealed in Scotland with a 99 to 17 vote.
- June 21 is Summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere and Winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere (12:26 UTC), Midsummer in northern Europe

Quote of the Day

"Liberty, as it is conceived by current opinion, has nothing inherent about it; it is a sort of gift or trust bestowed on the individual by the state pending good behavior."
~ Mary McCarthy

Word of the Day

- nirvana; n
- 1. The absence of all longing.
- 2. A state of paradise; heightened or great pleasure.
- 3. A blissful state attained through loss of self; enlightenment.

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