January 17, 2002

Attorney General John Ashcroft
U.S. Justice Department
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Ashcroft,

At long last, this debacle of an antitrust trial between the government and Microsoft has sputtered to a settlement. While the settlement is weighed slightly against Microsoft, it at least has the advantage of ending the litigation.

This entire lawsuit was, I believe, grounded in much misinformation and misunderstanding. A company's "dominance" in any particular market does not necessarily mean that it has achieved that status through anything other than legal – albeit aggressive – means. I believe this to have always been true of Microsoft. Microsoft never manipulated the marketplace to force anyone to purchase its system. Rather, its pricing policies, its integration, and its reliability attracted most people to its product. This is enviable, not despicable.

When our government engages in a mission to "level the playing field" for all, there is the natural side effect of having to "dumb down" those that have been successful, and force them to either step aside, or give away their hard-earned successes to those less fortunate souls who are not as creative or as industrious. This attitude is reflected in the settlement. Microsoft is being forced to give up some of its source code to others in order to satisfy the government need to level the IT playing field.

While it is useless to object, I find that the settlement at least has the advantage of ending the contentious nature of the trial. For this reason alone, I find myself supporting it.

Sincerely,

Charles Aunger
Chief Technology Officer

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