HOW TO WIPE OUT SILICON VALLEY'S CORRUPTION

Blogger/science fiction writer Cory Doctorow (also a former EFF staffer and activist) has just published *How to Destroy Surveillance Capitalism* — a new book which he's publishing free online. Get it for free here:

https://onezero.medium.com/how-to-destroy-surveillance-capitalism-8135e6744d59

In a world swamped with misinformation and monopolies, Doctorow says he's knows what's missing from our proposed solutions: *If we're going to break Big Tech's death grip on our digital lives, we're going to have to fight monopolies. That may sound pretty mundane and old-fashioned, something out of the New Deal era, while ending the use of automated behavioral modification feels like the plotline of a really cool cyberpunk novel... But trustbusters once strode the nation, brandishing law books, terrorizing robber barons, and shattering the illusion of monopolies' all-powerful grip on our society. The trustbusting era could not begin until we found the political will — until the people convinced politicians they'd have their backs when they went up against the richest, most powerful men in the world. Could we find that political will again...?*

That's the good news: With a little bit of work and a little bit of coalition building, we have more than enough political will to break up Big Tech and every other concentrated industry besides. First we take Facebook, then we take AT&T/WarnerMedia. But here's the bad news: Much of what we're doing to tame Big Tech instead of

breaking up the big companies also forecloses on the possibility of breaking them up later... Allowing the platforms to grow to their present size has given them a dominance that is nearly insurmountable — deputizing them with public duties to redress the pathologies created by their size makes it virtually impossible to reduce that size. Lather, rinse, repeat: If the platforms don't get smaller, they will get larger, and as they get larger, they will create more problems, which will give rise to more public duties for the companies, which will make them bigger still.

We can work to fix the internet by breaking up Big Tech and depriving them of monopoly profits, or we can work to fix Big Tech by making them spend their monopoly profits on governance. But we can't do both. We have to choose between a vibrant, open internet or a dominated, monopolized internet commanded by Big Tech giants that we struggle with constantly to get them to behave themselves...

Big Tech wired together a planetary, species-wide nervous system that, with the proper reforms and course corrections, is capable of seeing us through the existential challenge of our species and planet. Now it's up to us to seize the means of computation, putting that electronic nervous system under democratic, accountable control.

With "free, fair, and open tech" we could then tackle our other urgent problems "from climate change to social change" — all with collective action, Doctorow argues. And "The internet is how we will recruit people to fight those fights, and how we will coordinate their labor.

"Tech is not a substitute for democratic accountability, the rule of

law, fairness, or stability — but it's a means to achieve these things."