

Dear Mr McKie

I can understand the concern expressed in the Herald published yesterday, however I fear a more sinister concern relating to the proposals from our 'esteemed' Home Secretary. In a series of wide ranging powers and, as yet unspecified, an agency will have the right under anti terrorism legislation to tap your phone, intercept your e-mails, listen to your mobile phone calls and read your mail. They can also glean information from your neighbours, family and friends, workmates and any other anonymous source. Having compiled a 'dossier' this same agency can collect you at any time of the day or night without recourse to a warrant, can then take you to a secure place for an indefinite period and keep you there without charge and without giving you the right to access legal advice. At some point you can be brought before a special court in front of a "specially trained" judge. At your "trial" the agency will provide information about you which you cannot question, which will be read by a specially trained person the only function of whom will be to read the statement. No questions can be asked of this reader because they will not know any more than the content of the statement. On conviction (and you will be convicted) you can be taken to a secure establishment. No-one will know where you are. You will have no rights, no appeal and no prospect of release. And all of this, our Home Secretary assures us, is to protect us from anyone who is deemed to have links with, to actively support and/or to be a terrorist. We are further assured that, "an innocent person has nothing to fear from this legislation".

All this information will be in the hands of a Government who is infallible, whose computers are never wrongly programmed and who has IT operators who never make a mistake.

From your experience and that of your daughter, you have first hand experience of the devastation which can come when "the system" gets it wrong. Even more frightening than what happened to your daughter is the knowledge of what the Police did "to one of their own". Just imagine what "they" would do to a member of the public! It does not bear thinking about.

Unfortunately for us, the United States already has similar legislation administered by the Bureau for Homeland Security. And, like it or not, where America goes, the United Kingdom follows.

I have followed Shirley's case for a long time and admit to regularly quoting her experience when "simplistic" individuals argue that the government knows best. Despite the evidence, certain individuals continue to accept what the Government tells them. The only part of David Blunkett's comments which they repeat are "Innocent people have nothing to fear".

Iain McKenzie (Herald article adjacent to your one), comments that George Orwell was twenty years out. I fear George Orwell was out by a century. By 2084 we will all be fitted with little chips at birth and our every move, thought and action will be recorded by some faceless entity. Already our mobile phones give away our location, CCTV can follow our every move, sophisticated equipment can eavesdrop on our conversations and a raft of organisations carry information about us which can reveal our intimate secrets at the touch of a button. Not content with all that, companies regularly (mis) quote the Data Protection Act to prevent them from telling you what they know about you.

We seem to have a Government which rules by fear. The majority are so afraid of what will happen to them if they don't "go with the flow" that they stay quiet and put up with things they really do not agree with. The consequence is that the Government and her agents, take this silence as consent. When anyone does speak out, as Shirley found to her cost, the might of the "Establishment" falls on them from a great height. Those who view such things can be forgiven for their resignation to the inevitable. The way things are heading, a wrongly identified finger print is the least of our worries.

On another note - I had not realised that Shirley had been fighting for over eight years. The Herald has been quite supportive in the amount of column inches they have devoted to her story and to other who have been wrongly convicted. Only today, the Fraser report found that "no-one was to blame" for the Holyrood fiasco which saw the First Minister deliberately deceived by senior civil servants. It seems that where the "Establishment" is concerned, even when they are wrong: they are right.

God help us!

Yours sincerely

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