



Mammoth spy system- a danger to our liberty?

When the president admits the government operates a massive electronic spying network which scoops up data on our phone calls, our e-mails, our Internet traffic and who knows what all else, but promises this power will be used only against our enemies, do we believe him?

We're sure he means it.

He's not too happy that the secret is out, but many assumed this was going on all along. If it's possible, then you have to figure, some government agency will be doing it. When they say they are not listening to us, just collecting data, we have to believe them, right?

And when the president says safeguards built into the system ensure that it can never be used to spy on Americans, should we trust him?

No. And here's why.

We've already seen that the power of government can and will be used against domestic foes by an administration, Democrat or Republican. We need look no farther than the Internal Revenue Service, where senior managers apparently saw nothing wrong with targeting "Tea Party"-aligned nonprofit groups that opposed the administration while green-lighting similar, but liberal-minded, agencies.

But remember Richard Nixon and his pre-Watergate enemies list? He proposed siccing the IRS on his detractors.

One of the dangers of big government is that it concentrates so much power at the hands of a relative few, while the bureaucracy makes it difficult to hold anyone accountable for abuse. The National Security Agency which runs the computer snooping programs is so secretive that Washington wags used to say the initials

NSA stood for "No Such Agency."

In the coming era, what's to keep the system from turning on the citizens who paid to create it? Nothing but the integrity of those who run it, and we've already seen what that amounts to.

Lord Acton, the British historian, said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely."

He also said, "And remember, where you have a concentration of power in a few hands, all too frequently, men with the mentality of gangsters get control. History has proven that."

It's not that the government has designed a system to spy on those who might threaten it. It's that the system exists, and it could, almost certainly will, be turned against the people.

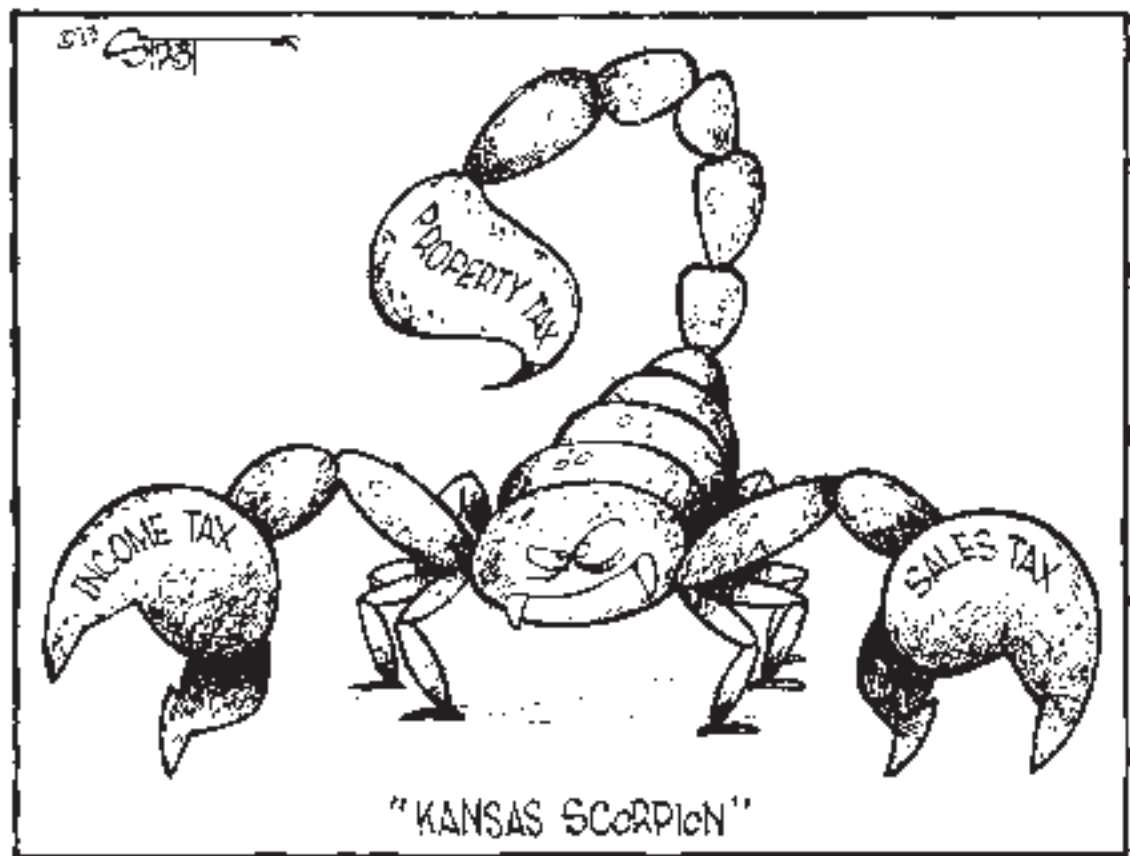
The same techniques built to track terrorists can and will be applied to law enforcement. Eventually, they'll be available to rogue elements, and some, like the rotten-apple IRS executives persecuting the tea partiers, or the Watergate gang, will use them.

As serious scientists gather to discuss the potential of transferring human intelligence to computer systems, it's time to realize that the electronic behemoth itself is a threat to our liberty.

Yes, we should be worried. If "they" are not listening to us today, they could be tomorrow. Such power is easy to abuse.

It's difficult to stop or even slow the advance of technology, but somewhere, somehow, we need to learn to control it and reign in its potential for abuse, to create enough transparency to allow us to know when we are the victims, before even that becomes something to be tracked.

- Steve Haynes



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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I don't think it's just us. Our county is getting older too.

A few years ago Bird City celebrated its 125 years of being, well, Bird City. Saint Francis followed with a similar party this last weekend.

Putting these mile stones in perspective, this land certainly was not "new" when the ancestors of today's residents crossed the wide-open plains to

settle in northwest Kansas. It was a land that was as wild as the area Indians could be fierce.

Not knowing all the adversity that lay ahead: hostile natives, dust storms, depression, floods, disease and other difficulties, it is a wonder that these people stayed to somehow scratch out an existence by harnessing this ground called Cheyenne County.

As we enjoy a quality of life

with all the modern conveniences available, we know, without their sacrifices, there would be no small towns to celebrate birthdays.

That says volumes for what has been accomplished in a century and a quarter out here.

Parents warned about taking children to upcoming movie

Dear Editor: Parental warning about Hangover III

I want to warn parents about the upcoming movie Hangover III. It may have content inappropriate for your kids. According to Plugged in Online it includes, 'About 100 f-words, 10 of which are paired with "mother." Thirty

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or so s-words. God's name is misused nearly 20 times, three times with "d--n." Jesus' name is abused half-a-dozen times. We hear a handful of uses each of "h--", "b--ch" and "a--." Alan uses the n-word once.' The sexual content

is too inappropriate to discuss in the paper. If you want to read the full review go to http://www.pluggedin.com/movies/intheaters/hangover-part-3.aspx.

Ryan Shay, St. Francis

Reader enjoys 125 celebration

To whom it may concern: The 125th celebration was great! It took a lot of planning and work. Everyone who did

anything to make it possible is to be commended. The weather was perfect. The returning alumni saw their home town at its best. St.

Francis did itself proud. Enjoyed it very much!

Marie Holzwarth, St. Francis

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



When I was a kid, my Grandma Skeen grew a 5 1/2-pound beet in her garden, and before she and her kids ate it, she took it down to the local newspaper office and ask if they would like to take a picture of it. They did. Grandma Skeen was very careful not to get in the picture.

That event would have occurred in 1939 when I was 9 years old. I had never before seen such a large beet, but Grandma Skeen allowed us to see how it had been a common occurrence in her garden over the years, and "you should see my watermelons!"

Grandma Skeen was Indiana born in 1869. She migrated to the Nebraska panhandle where she married Grandpa Skeen. To this union was born nine kids, the first four of which died in infancy. My mother was number eight on the list. The family moved to Southwest Kansas where Grandpa bought a nice farm, but promptly lost it after a few years of hard

times. You see, Grandpa Skeen was a noted horse trader, trained mules, and traveled all over the midwest doing his thing. He didn't seem to cotton too much to the family life, so Grandma Skeen divorced him and proceeded to raise those five kids on her own.

Grandma Skeen was a gardener! Man, was a she ever a gardener! With five kids and income only from a little nursing (she was not a nurse) and a little mid-wifing, she was able to make ends meet. But her income from gardening was far greater than anything she was able to make from some of those extra curricular activities. Her garden was huge! Two or three of the kids were still at home to help with the heavy lifting. Grandma Skeen had a half acre of potatoes every year, a very large patch of watermelon and cantaloupe, dozens of tomato vines, and lots of cabbage and green beans.

Most of Grandma Skeen's produce was sold right there near the garden where she set up a roadside stand just off Highway 54. In addition to the sales, she canned and stored lots of stuff for family use in the winter.

In my mind, I can still see Grandma Skeen in her garden in the later years where she tended a small plot in town. She always wore a long dress, with a long apron down to her knees. And always, always Grandma Skeen wore a big sun bonnet. The front part was heavily starched and protruded far out from her face to protect her from the sun.

I knew Grandma Skeen for only a little over 20 years, but when I was old enough to notice, I never have seen anyone since who raised more vegetables and flowers. She passed away in 1956, and gardened right up to the time she died.

I credit Grandma Skeen with passing down her gardening prowess to me, through my mother, who was also a special gardener. Of course, you don't see many backyard gardeners anymore who actually make a living from what they grow. Roadside garden stands just don't seem to exist anymore. But then, neither do horse traders!

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GOD SAYS Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. - II Corinthians 5:17

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