



Free Press Viewpoint

'Trust me,' he says, 'I'd never use data'

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 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

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor@nwkansas.com.

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"HE NO LONGER WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT WHEN HE GROWS UP. NOW HE WANTS TO BE A WHISTLE-BLOWER..."

Some love glass houses – others like caves

After visiting all three of our children in May, I've come to the conclusion that there are two types of people in this world – cave dwellers and those who live in glass houses.

And, they are not really comfortable in each other's adobes.

It took the final trip, to see our son in Lawrence, for me to figure this out.

He's a cave dweller. All the windows in his home are covered with shades, which he never pulls up. Day and night, the inside of the house has a dim cave-like atmosphere. He seems to like it, but it drove me nuts, and it took me quite a while to figure out why.

I asked him why he kept all the windows covered, and he replied that he lived in a fish bowl otherwise. Steve, who had visited the week before, admitted that he had been having breakfast in son's kitchen with the shade up and a man in the house next door waved to him.

This obviously bothers our son. Steve just waved back and went on with his breakfast.

That's because we are the sort of people who live in glass houses. We've owned three in our more than 40 years of marriage and looking back, I realize all of them had large sunny windows which we left open as much as possible.

I guess we just don't care what the neighbors see. We don't expect people to come peeping into our windows, and our bedroom is upstairs



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

and in the back of the house.

Our home in Colorado was billed as passive solar, which meant it had lots of windows on the south and few on the north. Our living room and bedroom were on the south.

In Kansas City, our living room had two sets of french doors leading out to a screened-in porch on the west side and a bright, cheery sun room on the east. We loved it.

I realized that we weren't unique while talking to Bob and Kay the other day.

Kay said that some friends go walking down their street each night. One of them told Kay that they have a running bet as to whether Kay and Bob will be watching a sporting event or a news show on television.

Bob and Kay have a wall of glass in their living room and another in their dining room. The dining room one looks out on their gorgeous back yard but the living room one gives a great view of their big television.

They don't care, I guess. They like the light.

My youngest daughter and her husband are cave dwellers.

We always knew that our son-in-law Brad was a cave dweller. When he worked in an office, he would take out half the light bulbs overhead in his cubicle and sit all day in half darkness working on his computer. Love that boy, but I swear he's half bat.

When the couple moved into their new home, her sister noted that they never opened the curtains, even the ones where the windows looked over the back yard.

It's true. They live in a perpetual half darkness. A cozy cave. And they like it that way.

The other daughter and son-in-law chose a home with windows and a screened-in porch, where he works from home. If the weather isn't too cold or too hot – that's more common in Georgia – he takes his computer out to the screened-in porch while our work-at-home daughter takes the office with lots of open windows.

I don't know that either lifestyle is the better choice. It just depends on your point of view: Love the light or close the curtains.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Get out of the way of small business

President Ronald Reagan once said that one of the scariest phrases in the English language is, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help."

Nowhere is that saying more true than for our nation's small businesses.

Listening to these job creators is so important because small businesses provide more than one-half of the jobs in America, especially here in the Heartland.

Owners spend countless hours and sleepless nights building a business so they can provide a little better life for their family. In turn, they are important citizens in our communities, employing their neighbors, paying the taxes that pay for our local governments and often sponsoring the town's little league teams.

While big businesses and liberal special interests in Washington negotiate deals on what new regulations will be "acceptable" to them, our small businesses struggle to keep up. They cannot afford to hire an army of lobbyists and lawyers to sift through the mountains of new mandates that are passed each year. Instead, they work extra hours at their office or at their kitchen table, trying to demystify the government mandates, make payroll, pay off the loan and maybe take that family vacation. And



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

there is no relief in sight.

This year in particular, our small businesses also face the uncertainties that come with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has already produced over 20,000 pages of Obamacare regulations to be implemented on Jan. 1, and her minions are not done yet.

Under Obamacare, once a small business reaches 50 employees, it must either comply with Obamacare mandates or face a stiff Internal Revenue Service penalty. As a result, many small businesses have been forced to reduce the hours of part-time and full-time workers in order to avoid the excesses of Obamacare. Others have not hired new employees or have laid off workers, Premiums have risen rather than fallen by \$2,500 as the president prom-

ised.

In addition to the countless regulations they face, our small businesses are forced to comply with a massive, complicated tax code that is nearly 74,000 pages long and changes each year. It takes the average American 13 hours to file their taxes each year, while small business owners can spend as much as 20 times longer complying with a litany of tax provisions.

What do these small business owners ask for from Washington? Get out of their way. Give them certainty, simplicity and a reduced tax and regulatory burden.

Small business owners want to know how to plan for the future. And instead of spending time complying with complex tax codes and regulations, they'd like to get back to their job.

This has been designated as National Small Business Week. What a great time to honor our small business owners by giving them what they deserve – not what a legion of Washington politicians and bureaucrats think they need.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp represents the 1st District of Kansas. A member of the Small Business Committee, he serves on the subcommittees on Agriculture, Energy and Trade and on Health and Technology.

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- Bruce Tinsley

