

Government subpoenas press phone records

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



The secret seizure of Associated Press phone records by the Justice Department investigating an alleged leak of top-secret information represents a dangerous abuse of government power.

In effect, the AP has been put on notice that if it persists in reporting stories the administration doesn't like, the government can destroy its credibility and scare off its sources.

The results could be a near end to investigative reporting in Washington, where almost everything the government does is secret, especially the bad stuff.

Who, after all, is going to call an AP reporter and give him or her background information on a story – any story – when the feds might be listening?

Tips from second-level sources are the way most Washington stories come out because only the top guys in any agency are "authorized" to speak to the press. And they only recite the administration line.

This is not about politics. Administrations of both parties have been guilty of abusing the Constitution. Remember Dick Nixon and his enemies list? The whole Watergate coverup?

But the Obama administration has been deep into repression of the press. Despite the fact that the president himself last week renewed his support of a reporters' shield law which could have prevented this fiasco, his administration still defends the subpoena used to get AP reporters' phone records.

This act has a particularly chilling effect on news gathering because just the thought that the FBI might be listening will keep a lot of mid-level bureaucrats from blowing the whistle on their bosses. And that's how the public finds out about a lot of government misbehavior.

Worse yet, the fear will dry up calls to other reporters. Who knows how many phones might be tapped in Washington, how many offices might be bugged?

It's not just that, of course. This is the same administration that allowed the Internal Revenue Service to hold up tax-exempt status for tea party-related groups that otherwise qualified just because they were conservative.

It's an administration, and a Justice Department, grounded in the Chicago-style tactics its leader learned at the knee of the Dailey family, who helped him get where he is and shared in federal appointments, influence and other spoils after his election.

There's nothing special about this bunch. No dreamers, no Camelot. Just politics, not as usual, but the worst kind.

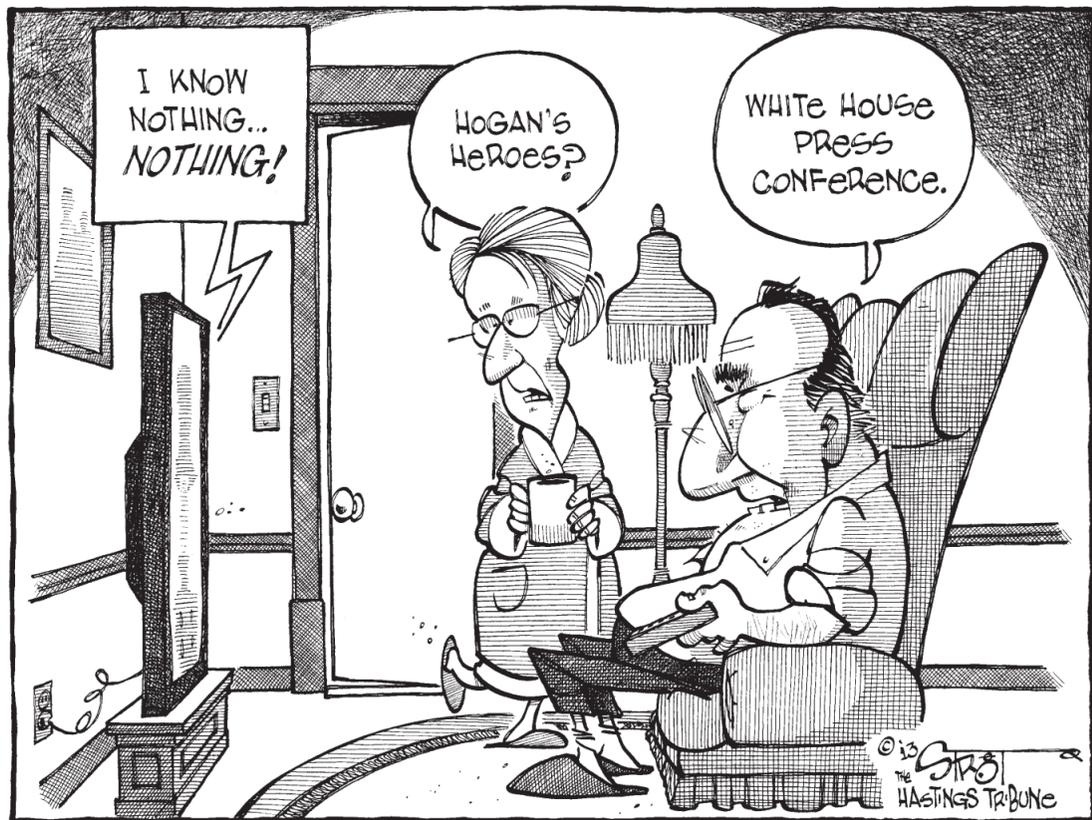
Tracing the calls on hundreds of phone lines, checking on everyone a reporter might have talked with in a slew of AP offices, the government showed it can flex its muscle at will.

This intrusion surely underlines the need for a strong federal shield law, one that will protect reporters' sources, allow courts to ferret out true danger to national security and keep government goons at bay.

It's not that the Obama gang is the enemy. They're just playing the game, even though they should know better. A growing and powerful security apparatus that wants ever tighter control over every aspect of American life is to blame. Politicians in both parties play the game.

We all need laws to defend us, and reporters in particular, because we depend on them to tell us what our government is up to. We need them to be free and unfettered in that quest.

— Steve Haynes



It's not like the good old days

When Former Senator Bob Dole says the GOP should hang a sign on the Republican National Committee door saying, "closed for repairs," you know things are in disarray. Over the weekend, according to reports, the Former Senator, in an appearance on FOX News, admitted the current Republican party is a far cry from the one he and the late President Ronald Reagan claimed membership. A little bit like members of the NRA who say the organization bears little resemblance to the one they joined thirty year ago, but that's another story.

GOP tea partiers have changed the agenda of the party, and not for the better. Although they feel dedicated and justified in their beliefs, this minority group within a majority party has failed to realize the true meaning of a democracy. The part where you listen to the voice of the majority of

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



the voters, irregardless of whether you share in those beliefs. Unfortunately, their actions have had the effect of bringing the United States' government to a standstill. Why? Because they view compromise or common ground as weakness and not part of their, as in Tea Party, ideals. The members of this ultra conservative group have held other GOP members hostage as a way of accomplishing what they see as the only way to save the country. It isn't like they have a large following, as reflected in recent elections. The GOP

took quite a hit in 2008 and in the subsequent two elections the Tea Party candidates didn't fare much better.

It isn't that the small faction within the GOP doesn't believe in their ideals. They do, but the problem arises when they see their desires as more important than the act of government itself. To lead with the notion that you know better what is best for the country than voters, is not democracy.

The GOP has had its fair share of powerful and distinguished statesmen, something which speaks highly of the Republican Party as it was, but even more importantly, of the democratic system of government itself. A well functioning government makes both sides look good, because it shows the ability to work together. Something that in today's Congress is sorely lacking. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Living better and living longer no matter your age

"Live Longer!" the headline proclaimed.

"Sit down on the floor any way you'd like using as little support as possible from your hands, knees, etc. Then rise. In a new Brazilian study, researchers found that participants who'd used the most body parts were 5.4 times more likely to die within the next six years than those able to sit and rise using just their own strength or one body part."

Somewhere I've also read that problem solving keeps our brains young. The results of my attempt to get up from the floor using my own strength or one body part, leaves me hoping my cunning ability to get off the floor by any means trumps my lack of physical strength.

If only they were giving points for the most body parts used! People buy gym memberships and hire trainers for less of a workout!

Also, my willingness to try things proves I'm at least young at heart!

Or perhaps I'm just masochistic. I knew going in the test would be a miserable failure but did it anyway!

Far more interesting than if one gets up off the floor easily are the everyday surprises of what one can do if they

This Too
Shall Pass
Nancy
Hagman



need or desire to.

BKR (before knee replacement) I had a very difficult time rising from a chair unless I had something (a table, chair arms, etc.) to push against with my arms. It became a habit. So even though I can now get up without a little push, I still do it.

I made a concerted effort to practice getting up and down without assistance. I managed to retrain my body. The brain proves more challenging!

When I'm holding my new grandbaby, Morris, I rise without difficulty or pain. Yet; in the back of my mind is the thought, "How do I get up?" Especially if the chair has arms. This tells me I may just be lazy! Or clever; why do things the hard way?

A representative of a charitable trust told me they funded a request for armchairs in a waiting area at a hospital

because "We older people need the arms to get up and down from chairs." She is about a year older than me. I don't know if by "we" she meant herself and those older or if she was including me in the group.

I don't mind being considered old or begrudge people armchairs, but since I have worked hard to overcome the need to rely on them I felt insulted! How many things could we do, even with the justification of age or bad knees, if we had to?

Health considerations aside, Morris is a good reason to work on the "floor exercise". Soon, I'll want to get down and play with him. I'd like to accomplish that with at least some grace and dignity!

So I've resolved to start trying getting up and down once every morning and night.

I recently saw a cartoon of an obviously miserable old curmudgeon sitting in the Doctor's office. The Doctor said, "Remember all those things you did so you'd live extra years? Well these are those years!"

Living longer is an admirable goal, I suppose. Personally I hope to "LIVE BETTER"!

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Double thumbs up to Nancy Hagman for her column in the May 24 edition of the Norton Telegram. Called in.

Thumbs up to Kris Knapp for a great all school reunion. Called in.

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