

Protect us from the government

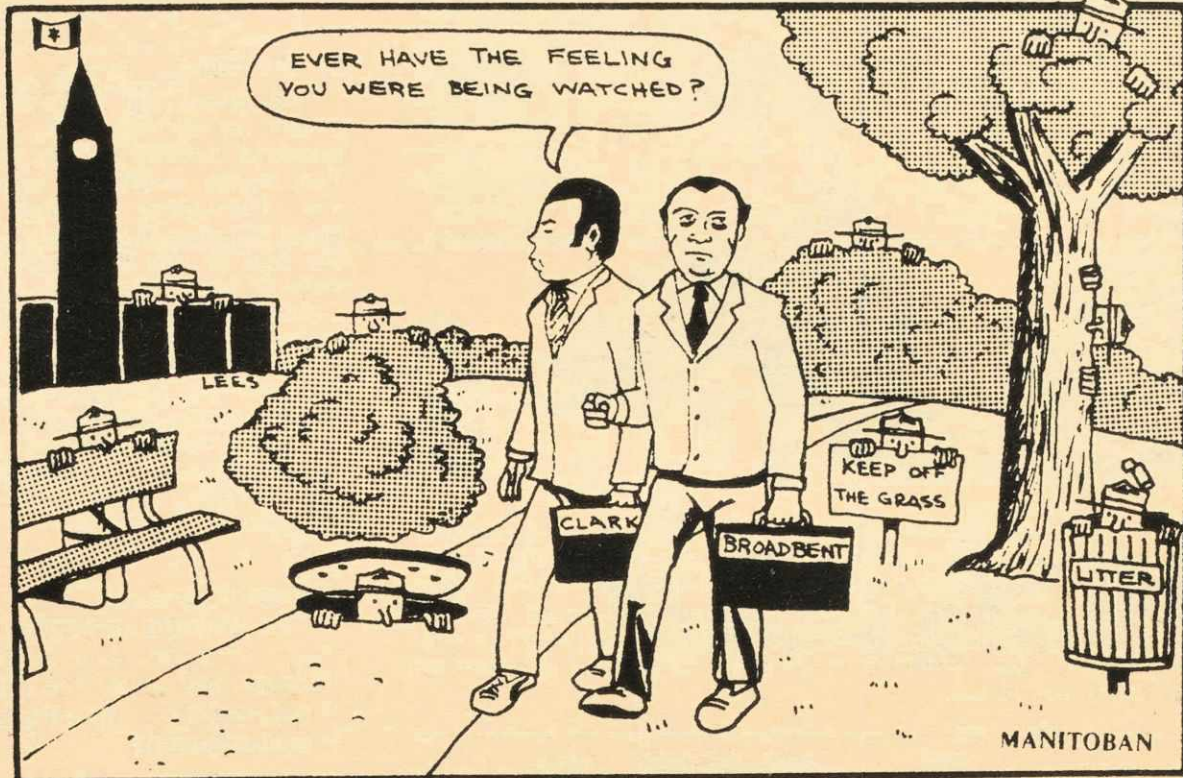
Comment is an opinion column open to members of the university community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

by John Leonard

The system of Canadian government is increasingly seen to be structured so as to protect itself from us, yet as the revelations of both legal and illegal RCMP and military intelligence surveillance and harassment clearly indicate it is us who need protection from the government. These revelations should not shock (as opposed to outrage) anyone, for Canada has always had a secret political police, but the attitudes of Pierre Trudeau and the public should.

The Canadian government is the most secretive of all the Western liberal democracies. As we all know, the majority of Canadians have no significant say in the running of the country, and democracy consists of a manipulated popularity contest among rich men, all of whom will ignore our interests in favour of the corporations and the wealthy Canadian governments have always perceived that they have a right to rule and to protect themselves from dissidents and interference—on the theory that there is government and it rules, the people obey and get to exercise a virtually meaningless vote every four years. The operations of the Cabinet and the even more powerful bureaucracy is protected by the Official Secrets Act, traditional practice etc, not in the interests of national or societal security, but the freedom and security of the government. Trying to obtain even the most innocuous documents brings one face to face with the iron curtain of secrecy the government has erected around itself to protect it from public scrutiny and interference.

The possession of power by the Liberals, surely the most elitist and establishment party, for most of this century has created a one party state and government which sees any attempt to interfere with the status quo as an intolerable and illegitimate, indeed subversive, intrusion into the "natural" order of things. Indeed the reluctance of the Trudeau Liberal government to give up the control and manipulation of information is a phenomena to behold, and explains in itself why a thorough going Freedom of Information Act would be the greatest single boon to democratic govern-



ment in Canada at this time . . . which is precisely why we won't be getting it!

It is evident that we are not only excluded from any information or real political power, but that the state apparatus has been engaged in a whole campaign of surveillance and harassment activities directed against Party and government opponents. Indeed the program of threats, intimidation and terrorism has been carried out against any individual or group that opposes government policy, or is perceived to oppose the principle of private property and the institutions of corporate capitalism which the Liberals are much more anxious to defend than freedom.

The operative word is "order", the present order in all senses of the term. Even with some of the widest powers given any police force in the Western world, the secret political police of the RCMP and the Armed Forces have not hesitated to break the law in pursuit of real or imagined dissidents . . . because there concern is not the law, but to protect the established order. The official reason for the assaults on Praxis was that it was "organizing

the underclasses of society." The state is really threatened by the violent acts of Ed Broadbent, the labour unions, university students and the MP's of the opposition parties! But the threat of violence or violent overthrow of the regime was not the operatant principle, the targets are any dissidents, anyone who threatens the established order, be it the American multi-nationals or the Liberal Party.

Can we blame this on a few misguided and paranoid right wing political zealots who run the security services? I think not. What we are seeing in the continuing revelations is the tip of a waterlogged iceberg, much of which will be protected by precisely the same mechanisms which ensure secret government by the Liberal party at normal times. Civil and political liberties in Canada are a farce—you can say anything you want (while

the RCMP takes it down for use against you later) but it will not have any effect and will land you into trouble eventually. Unfortunately the public has been well conditioned to fear dissent, even their own, and will likely go along with Trudeau's attempt to rehabilitate the RCMP and the Liberals by changing the law to make it fit the crime, or tossing law out the window when it suits them.

Canada is not a democracy in any meaningful use of the term, it is a one party oligarchy with the electoral trappings of a democracy. In reality there is only a difference in style and a narrower margin of degree than most people imagine between Canada and the Soviet Union or Franco's Spain. DON'T SPEAK TOO LOUD, THEY'RE LISTENING . . .

And get my name spelled right, eh Staff Sergeant?

Mounty Night in Canada

by Mark Simkins

While waiting for his eminence, PET, to make his entrance I overheard a conversation between two RCMP security plains clothes. There were at least 10 of these guys scattered through Province House. They all looked like big, fatherly ex-hockey players in trench coats. One had to keep in mind they all probably had guns somewhere where the sun don't shine. They asked me for my press card because I probably looked like a scruffy terrorist with a camera around my neck. Anyway two of these legal hoods had a conversation that went something like this:

Dennis Hull look-a-like in grey suit: "Well I think the security forces should have a good contingency plan and the powers for taking over the country and government if the present government collapsed."

Frank Mahovilich look-a-like in blue pinstripe: "Yeah, well but shouldn't the army be in on this too?"

Hull: "Yeah sure, but the RCMP would be ideal, we are already all over the Parliament and Ottawa and we are closest to the Prime minister."

Mahovilich: "Sure there should be a plan or sumthin'."

Dennis Hull with the .38 "Yeah, maybe the government will collapse, or be unable to form a majority government, and Quebec will secede and that would be an ideal time for the RCMP to step in."

Frank Mahovilich: "Yeah, great idea, a law or some plans should be made soon . . . The discussion continued ad infinitum."

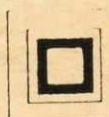
Well Trudeau showed up, and I took some pictures and he said that the government was not in anything illegal as far as the RCMP went. Well maybe they are, maybe they aren't, but if the buffalo boys ever took over they wouldn't have to worry about the illegalities of letter opening, barn burning, bugging or bombing. Those kind of things would be legal under the Royal Republic of the Buffalos.



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