

Living by the Sword

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It has been said that “he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword.” And in the case of Eliot Spitzer this couldn’t be more true. In his case it’s the political sword, as his enemies rejoice in his downfall. Most people, it seems, believe he got exactly what he deserved.

The illegal tools of the state brought Spitzer down, but think of all the harm done by Spitzer in using the same tools against so many other innocent people. He practiced what could be termed “economic McCarthyism,” using illegitimate government power to build his political career on the ruined lives of others.

No matter how morally justified his comeuppance may be, his downfall demonstrates the worst of our society. The possibility of uncovering personal moral wrongdoing is never a justification for the government to spy on our every move and to participate in sting operations.

For government to entice a citizen to break a law with a sting operation – that is, engaging in activities that a private citizen is prohibited by law from doing -- is unconscionable and should clearly be illegal.

Though Spitzer used the same tools to destroy individuals charged with economic crimes that ended up being used against him, gloating over his downfall should not divert our attention from the fact that the government spying on American citizens is unworthy of a country claiming respect for liberty and the fourth amendment.

Two wrongs do not make a right. Two wrongs make it doubly wrong.

Sacrifice of our personal privacy has been ongoing for decades, but has rapidly accelerated since 9/11. Before 9/11 the unstated goal of collecting revenue was the real reason for the erosion of our financial privacy. When nineteen suicidal maniacs attacked us on 9/11, our country became convinced that further sacrifice of personal and financial privacy was required for our security.

The driving force behind this ongoing sacrifice of our privacy has been fear and the emotional effect of war rhetoric – war on drugs, war against terrorism, and the war against third world nations in the Middle East who are claimed to be the equivalent to Hitler and Nazi Germany.

But the real reason for all this surveillance is to build the power of the state. It arises from a virulent dislike of free people running their own lives and spending their own money. Statists always demand control of the people and their money.

Recently we’ve been told that this increase in the already intolerable invasion of our privacy was justified because the purpose was to apprehend terrorists. We were told that the massive amounts of information being collected on Americans would only be used to root out terrorists. But as we can see today, this monitoring of private activities can also be used for political reasons. We should always be concerned when the government accumulates information on innocent citizens.

Spitzer was brought down because he legally withdrew cash from a bank – not because he committed a crime. This should prompt us to reassess and hopefully reverse this trend of pervasive government intrusion in our private lives.

We need no more Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act!

No more Violent Radicalization & Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Acts!

No more torture!

No more Military Commissions Act!

No more secret prisons and extraordinary rendition!

No more abuse of habeas corpus!

No more PATRIOT Acts!

What we need is more government transparency and more privacy for the individual!