

## Ten reasons why the Left should like the ASI, 5: Anti-surveillance

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**5. The ASI opposes official surveillance and secret powers.** The Left should welcome the ASI's opposition to snooping and surveillance by authority and its support for an open rule of law.

It is not a legitimate exercise of authority for a state to spy on its subjects. If they go about their peaceful business, their activities are no concern of government, and government has no right to intrude into them. Government is our servant, not our master, put in place by the people to protect them and to safeguard their liberties. Using the excuse of monitoring possible terrorist acts, government has resorted to quite illegitimate surveillance measures into the lives of its law-abiding citizens. The ASI has opposed the extension of these powers, and the use of CCTV cameras by local authorities in quite trivial cases such as improper parking, putting out rubbish for collection at the wrong times, or to monitor whether parents live at the addresses claimed in their school applications.

The cry that "only the guilty have anything to fear" has been used to justify the oppressive intrusion of tyrants throughout history. In fact the innocent have a great deal to fear from governments which demand the right to read their mails, to eavesdrop on their conversations, to record them on camera, and to monitor their movements. These things are no legitimate concern of governments.

The ASI supports the rule of law, done openly and subject to public scrutiny. It opposes secret courts and secret powers, and supports the right of accused persons to trial by jury and full public scrutiny of the judicial process. Where there is legitimate cause for concern about public safety, and surveillance is indicated, there should be separate application each time, judged on its merits by a magistrate, rather than an automatic and general right to conduct it.

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