

*The Rock River Times*TM

The Voice of the Community

Viewpoint: Death of the Republic?

By Joe Baker, Senior Editor

America's darkest hour is about to descend. We commented briefly on it last week. It's called the Homeland Security Act.

This misbegotten product of evil minds has already cleared the U.S. House. The Senate will act on it this week. If this measure is passed and signed into law by the president, it will create the Department of Homeland Security.

If the Senate sees fit not to amend this more than 400-page document, the consequences for Americans will be drastic.

This is what will happen to all of us, as outlined by New York Times columnist William Safire:

“Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you

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buy and medical prescription you fill, every Web site you visit and e-mail you send or receive, every academic grade you receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book and every event you attend—all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as ‘a virtual, centralized grand database.’

“To this computerized dossier on your private life from commercial sources, add every piece of information that government has about you—passport application, driver's license and bridge toll records, judicial and divorce records, complaints from nosy neighbors to the FBI, your lifetime paper trail plus the latest hidden camera surveillance—and you have the supersnoop's dream: a ‘Total Information Awareness’ about every U.S. citizen.”

If that isn't enough to scare you out of your socks, consider this: this unprecedented, gargantuan database operation will be administered by a convicted felon!

That's right. Admiral John Poindexter, found guilty on five counts of lying under oath and misleading Congress, is the director of the Information Awareness Office. His conviction was overturned on appeal in 1990 because Congress had granted Poindexter immunity for his testimony.

Poindexter was the one who cooked up the scheme during the Reagan administration to sell missiles to Iran in exchange for the hostages they were holding and use the proceeds to finance (illegally) the Contras in Nicaragua.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Pentagon, the unit that spawns new technology for the military and government, began awarding contracts this month for developing a prototype of the Total Information Awareness system.

But that isn't quite enough to satisfy the power lust of Poindexter and others behind this plan. Before the security bill was presented to the House for a vote, they sneaked in provisions to implement nearly unlimited powers for the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons is opposed to this section and urges Congress to eliminate it.

"This section will give the Secretary unlimited power to define a real or potential threat, to take any measures he decides, and to do it for as long as he wants," said Kathryn Serkes, spokeswoman for the group. "It's Alice in Wonderland time again—an emergency is just what he says it is."

This language puts in place the ability to force us to have smallpox or other immunizations, to undergo quarantines or submit to any other measures deemed necessary by the Secretary.

It effectively adopts the Model States Emergency Health Powers Act that most states rejected last year. "Just remove 'governor' from the old bill," said Serkes, "and insert 'Secretary,' and magically you have a federal bill that was firmly rejected by voters across the country."

AAPS sent voters thousands of e-mail alerts asking them to request removal of this section from the bill. Other voices are beginning to be raised.

The American Civil Liberties Union is calling on the Pentagon to immediately halt all research on this spy program.

"If the Pentagon has its way," said Laura Murphy, director of the ACLU's Washington office, "every American—from the Nebraskan farmer to the Wall Street banker—will find themselves under the accusatory cyber-state of an all-powerful national security apparatus."

One of the very few voices raised against this move in the House was that of Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas. When President Bush first broached the idea of this new department more than a year ago, he claimed it

would have few employees and only a modest budget and would not greatly alter government's organization.

Rep. Paul noted: "When the House of Representatives initially considered creating a Department of Homeland Security, the legislative vehicle almost overnight grew from 32 pages to 282 pages—and the cost had ballooned to at least \$3 billion. Now we are prepared to vote on a nearly 500-page bill that increases federal expenditures and raises troubling civil liberties questions. Worst of all, the text of the bill has not been made readily available to most members, meaning this Congress is prepared to create a massive new federal agency without even knowing the details. This is a dangerous and irresponsible practice."

Sound familiar? Maybe just like passage of the USA Patriot Act? What is going on here? Is this just a naked grab for absolute power on the part of Bush-Cheney and company?

Philip Zelikow, executive director of a Markle Foundation task force on national security and a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, said the immediate challenge facing the government is to make better use of the great mass of data it already has or can easily get.

"Data mining, like any other government data analysis," he said, "should occur where there is a focused and demonstrable need to know, balanced against the dangers to civil liberties. It should be purposeful and responsible."

Just who is Philip Zelikow and what is the Markle Foundation? It turns out Zelikow is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and was on the National Security Council Staff in the Bush White House from 1989 to 1991.

The Markle Foundation is a non-profit, philanthropic organization with \$200 million in assets and was established in 1927. The foundation works to utilize the potential of communications media and information technology.

The foundation president is Zoe Baird, an attorney. Where else does her name turn up? Surprise! She's a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a trustee of the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

You might recall that Zoe was proposed by the Clinton administration for the post of U.S. Attorney General. She retired from consideration, to the embarrassment of herself and the president, when it was learned she had hired an undocumented alien to be a nanny for her children.

As for the CFR, a public information Web site describes the organization this way: "The Council on Foreign Relations has been the most powerful private organization in U.S. foreign policy since it began in 1921. While priding itself on non-partisanship, CFR's 4,000 members mainly reflect the resources needed by the ruling class to maintain their power. Don't call them if you want to join; they call you.

And don't wait for a call unless you have big money, national security expertise, CIA experience, a political constituency, or clout with the media."

Poindexter tells us: "We're just as concerned as the next person with protecting privacy." All of the above and the word of a convicted liar are very reassuring, no doubt.

It is probably too late to do anything about all of this, but there might be a slight chance remaining. You could contact your senators and plead with them to kill this godawful program. Don't bother trying to reach Rep. Don Manzullo. He's already voted for it, and the House has gone home. Forget Mr. Blagojevich, too. Even though he's still a member of Congress, he didn't bother to vote on this issue.

Little is left but prayer, and there had better be lots of it. Rep. Paul notes: "HR 5710 (Homeland Security Act) also expands the federal police state by allowing the attorney general to authorize federal agency inspectors general and their agents to carry firearms and make warrantless arrests."

That's just a shred of what James Carville meant when he said after the mid-term elections that the American people haven't a clue as to what's coming. Heaven help us all!

As the following e-mail from one of our readers quoted Tony Benn, British Labour Party Member of Parliament: "If democracy is ever to be threatened, it will not be by revolutionary groups burning government offices and occupying the broadcasting and newspaper offices of the world. It will come from disenchantment, cynicism and despair caused by the realization that the New World Order means we are all are to be managed and not represented."

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