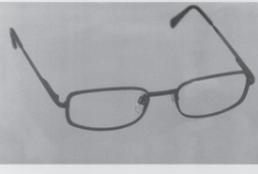


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Revising Anti-Terrorism Act will require national co-operation



PATRICK
ROSS

If there's a standard cliché when it comes to matters of overzealous national security, it is, without a doubt, that of Big Brother from George Orwell's 1984. Hopefully such references will be put to rest somewhat now, however, as the Conservative government's bid to renew anti-terrorism legislation was defeated on Tuesday.

Liberal house leader Ralph Goodale held a press conference the day before, where he berated Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his support of the controversial Anti-Terrorism Act, which created new police powers and amended Canadian laws in 2001 under his own party's power. Paradoxically, Goodale also accepted credit for his party, noting that after 9/11, "[t]he Liberal government of the day invested some \$10 billion to strengthen public safety and national security agencies and activities. We created Canada's first comprehensive department of public safety and Canada's first formal national security policy."

In the end, Goodale promotes his party as innovators of security policy while simultaneously denouncing those security policies. Here he invokes the spectre of Big Brother, suggesting that Harper's support of the Liberals' anti-terrorism legislation is "only further justification of real concern among

Canadians about the potential misuse of anti-terrorism laws in the hands of this Conservative government."

It seems an awful lot like the ludicrous, "Soldiers with guns. In our cities. In Canada" ad that the Liberals were forced to pull from the airwaves during the 2005/06 election, and for good reason—both examples seek to exploit the political moral capital that can be generated by portraying an opponent as a tyrant-in-waiting.

**Behind all the Liberals'
posturing and
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human rights lurks a
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party whip.**

It also ignores the fact that the Liberals instituted the Anti-Terrorism Act themselves under a majority government. The five detainees held under the controversial security certificates—Mohamed Harkat, Hassan Almrei, Adil Charkaoui, Mahmoud Jaballah and Mohammad Mahjoub—were all held under certificates signed by Liberals. Three of them continue to be held. The Liberals themselves were the victims of unwarranted controversy when Holocaust denier and terrorist collaborator Ernst Zundel was held under a security certificate until deported.

Very little remains known about the detentions of the "Secret Trial Five." Almrei and Jaballah have both been

denied bail, while Mahjoub, Harkat and Charkaoui have been released on strict conditions. While the Zundel case shows us that security certificates fulfill a justifiable function for Canadian security, there's no question that some reform is in order. This was firmly established by the Supreme Court when it ruled that refusing the accused access to evidence is unconstitutional. Fair enough. But whether the outright abolition of the certificates on Tuesday was justified, this matter is undeniably in need of reform.

Harper has proposed as much, noting that the Supreme Court has "laid out for Parliament a pretty clear road map on how to rectify the legislation so it can continue to sustain the security-certificate regime." For their part, the Liberals pledged that the party would "work tirelessly with the Conservative government to find reasonable and effective improvements to the anti-terrorism laws of Canada."

However, behind all the Liberals' posturing and supposed defence of human rights lurks a spectre of their own: the presence of the party whip. Liberal MP and Chief Opposition Whip Karen Redman confirmed recently that she would be enforcing party discipline, stating she "will know where [her colleagues] are, and how they will vote."

One can't help but wonder about the principles of a party that would seek to defeat its own anti-terrorism legislation, still claim credit for it and yet still play the Big Brother card within its own caucus. But when it comes to matters of national security, one thing is clear: co-operation should come before partisan politics.

Pets just aren't worth the risk



ANDREW
NEWBORN

"Anthrozoology.org suggests that there are 'many psychological benefits animal companionship can give us, including providing security for the anxious, companionship for the lonely and status symbols for the image conscious.' All of which I interpret as 'animals are crutches for the weak minded.'"

You've seen it before: someone comes into contact with a domesticated animal, and they explode into a high-pitched, cutesy-voiced tirade about the little critter. They fawn over it, pet it, rub it and cast little bits of personality onto it ("You're a good boy, aren't you? Oh yes you are!"). I'm sure that almost everyone has seen hundreds of different cats and dogs in their lives, yet somehow for some it's a time-stopping orgasmic bliss every single time. But you can't do anything but roll your eyes, because saying a word of protest would cast you into the realm of social leper.

For me, this alone justifies banning pets in Canada, but there's a myriad of other reasons as well. Even the most responsible owners can't control their pets all of the time. For example, being chased by runaway dogs can be terrifying, as once happened to me. I don't know what kind they were—I just don't care enough about the various human-engineered pseudo-species to know—but they were large, vicious and angry. My youth has been filled with rogue cats shitting in my parents' yard, and I anticipate much the same thing once I have a place of my own.

Of course, it's not just pet owners that are the issue; animals themselves have inherent problems that make them unbearable to share a society with. Like many, I suffer from pet allergies, and it makes visiting other people's houses difficult. You never know if you're going to find their home infested with rampaging cats or slow-moving dogs, all bent on attacking with dander rather than teeth. Dogs and birds can also be an extreme annoyance just with their incessant noise-making.

The reasons for actually owning a pet are entirely lost on me, without even considering the cost and responsibility associated with pet ownership. Anthrozoology.org suggests that there are "many psychological benefits animal companionship can give us, including providing security for the anxious, companionship for the lonely and status symbols for the image conscious." All of which I interpret as "animals are crutches for the weak minded."

For a person to suggest that they want an animal for their own well-being is similar to a person declaring that they would like a husband or wife—anyone will do, really—just to feel better about him or herself. After all, a person who

gets married hopefully doesn't do it for the psychological benefits.

I can't help but wonder what the quality of life is like for the average pet. Is a dog that stares at the front door all day waiting for the return of its owner really having that great of a time? Perhaps well behaved pets are simply living with a collective case of Stockholm Syndrome. Boredom must surely be an issue for a bird trapped in a cage or a dog whose daily highlights are eating, walking and shitting.

I suggest banning pet ownership to solve all of these issues. Start by outlawing pet sales by pet stores and breeders. Step up animal shelter efforts, and play fast and loose with their euthanasia policies. Eventually all of the animals currently in captivity will die off, and we can officially outlaw pets once and for all.

I'm not suggesting that anybody stop eating meat, or that we end cattle farming, or any of those other PETA-esque animal lover ideas. I'm all for raising animals for specific, utilitarian purposes—while preferably giving them a bit of room to run around—but keep them out of towns and cities. Things will surely be a cleaner and saner for it.