

*Voice of the People*  
*Akron Beacon Journal*  
Posted on Fri, Feb. 10, 2006

### **Chill factor**

*With all the spin of late regarding National Security Agency spying on American citizens -- or as the Bush administration puts it, supposedly targeted conversations from terrorists overseas -- it is easy to forget the original story that broke in late December, which focused on surveillance of a peaceful Quaker group in Florida.*

*Public opinion regarding the NSA wiretapping understandably sways in support of this practice, especially if it truly is targeted at terrorists, as we're being led to believe. But the issue of surveillance of groups within this country is another story, and one hardly confined to one group in Florida. In fact, an eight-page sampling of a 400-page TALON (Threat and Local Observation Notice) report identified two such surveillance activities against the American Friends Service Committee in Akron and the Northeast Ohio Antiwar Coalition in Cleveland.*

*Whether or not one agrees with our position, every American should be outraged at the chilling trend in our government to single out anyone who may not agree with its policies. Those of us who have the "audacity" to exercise our constitutional right to question the decisions and actions of our public servants are seen as threats. While the designation "threat" may seem ridiculous to those of us who have participated in peaceful demonstrations, it is hardly a laughing matter.*

*Provisions of the USA Patriot Act may even allow the government to categorize those of us who are not card-carrying supporters of this administration as "disrupters" subject to felony charges if we dare show our faces at presidential or national events. In short, "Anyone who does not agree with us is not invited to participate."*

*When we allow our government, unchecked, to chisel away at our civil liberties for any reason, we are all at risk. And it is we -- all of us -- who must stand collectively against this outrage.*

*Apathy, going shopping and leaving the "hard work" of governing our nation to an elite gaggle of politicians out of touch with the mainstream, is not what our founders intended. A government "by the people, for the people" is an ideal we seem to have lost in this age of terror and fear.*

*When the president stated shortly after 9/11 that "you are either with us or you are against us," I don't think many of us realized that he was referring not only to the terrorists outside but also to those of us who might question some of his dubious decisions within. I sincerely hope that the people of this nation wake up and realize that the president is supposed to work for us, not against us or in spite of us.*

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