

The John Locke Society

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Chancellor

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“The great end of men's entering into society [is] the enjoyment of their properties in peace and safety . . .”
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapter XI

As recognized by the Society's namesake, the primary purpose of government, indeed its very rationale, is to enable men to enjoy their lives without having to personally ensure their own security as they would in the state of nature. In civil society, security is a task left to the civil authorities. A pressing issue for conservatives, however, is how far should government go in providing this security. Two recent movies, *Enemy of the State* and *Gattaca*, dramatically illustrate the uneasy tension for conservatism between maintaining the security of a citizen's person and possessions, and the privacy of that citizen from the prying eyes of government.

The Chairman can think of many means to ensure that men have the security to enjoy their lives, means that do not infringe upon men's essential liberties and privacy. DNA fingerprinting, an effective and nearly foolproof method of crime fighting, should be universally required. Security cameras should be posted at all public places as that would deter crime and aid the police in apprehending suspects. Additionally, perhaps mandatory wiretaps on all public telephone calls should be required to force criminals to engage in a more inefficient means of criminal enterprise. If one is not engaged in criminal activity, then what does one have to worry about if one's conversations or public actions are recorded? Government agents do not care about the idle gossip and chatter that passes as conversation, and besides, appropriate safeguards can be put in place to ensure that citizens' privacy will not be tampered with. The real danger is that if government does not act to take prudent measures to reduce crime and provide for public security, then far more extreme measures—like those illustrated in Bruce Willis' movie *The Siege*—will have to be taken to combat the resultant criminal threat to public safety which would truly threaten men's liberties and privacy rather than the relatively innocuous measures suggested here. Fundamentally, criminals are the greatest threat to our liberties, not government.

Yet, these measures make the Chairman uneasy. Many of them sound all too much like the methods of “Big Brother” in George Orwell's *1984*. Universal DNA fingerprinting, while effective in crime fighting, also provides a universal database that would allow government (and the private sector) to discriminate against those whose DNA indicates physical imperfections and instrumentally abets the creation of a genetically pure society. Public security cameras are merely a slippery slope to the eventual installation of cameras on private property. After all, if security cameras on public property prevents crime, why not require them on private property where they can be even more effective since most crime occurs on private property. Giving the government these tools to fight crime also gives the government the tools to spy on citizens and to eventually control their every thought and deed. Implementing these measures would make the cure worse than the disease. Finally, as John Locke stressed, the right of revolution is man's greatest defense against tyranny. Putting these measures into place would greatly reduce the ability to exercise that right and send the United States down the road to a society akin to that of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union.

Not sure how to resolve this tension, the Chairman solicits the views of Members and guests of the John Locke Society, who are invited to the fourth *Ronald Wilson Reagan Debate Caucus* to grapple with this weighty issue by debating

Resolved: An All-Seeing Uncle Sam is No Enemy of Conservatism.

The Society will assemble **Thursday, May 13th**, in the Weatherford Room of the Royal Oaks Country Club (7915 Greenville Avenue, Dallas). The Provostery will open at **6:00 p.m.** (finger sandwiches, select cheeses, and a cash bar are available). The Chairman will gavel the Caucus to order at precisely **7:00 p.m.** Gentlemen are reminded to adorn proper neckwear; ladies should adhere to a similar sartorial standard. Literary presentations are encouraged. Please direct questions to the Chairman at 214-871-3059.