

FROM: NO CCTV (www.no-cctv.org.uk)
Press Release 15th December 2009
Attn: News Desks



-- BEGINS --

GOVERNMENT APPOINTS CCTV YES MAN

The government has announced the appointment of Andrew Rennison to the post of Interim CCTV Regulator[1].

The creation of the regulator is in line with the first recommendation of the National CCTV Strategy[2], published in October 2007, where it was described as "a body responsible for the governance and use of CCTV in the UK". Previous mentions of this body suggested it would be called the National CCTV Board but it seems that they chose Regulator to appease those who believe that surveillance cameras would be okay if they were properly regulated.

In reality the regulator will further legitimate the use of surveillance cameras in the UK despite studies, funded by the very bodies responsible for the Strategy (NPIA and the Home Office), that show CCTV is not an effective crime fighting tool[3].

The line likely to be taken by government, the CCTV industry and unfortunately many so called civil liberties groups in the UK will be that this is the first step in properly regulating CCTV. CCTV is already regulated by the Data Protection Act, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and the Human Rights Act - none of which adequately protects the freedoms of UK citizens from surveillance cameras. Regulation of surveillance cameras will simply add false legitimacy to the ever expanding CCTV network. We do not need more regulation - it is the common law principles which govern the protection of our privacy that we should all be working to uphold.

Rennison can hardly be viewed as an independent candidate for the CCTV job. He was a police officer who then joined the Gambling Commission before going on to become the first Forensic Science Regulator in 2007. He sits on the National DNA Database Strategy Board, which has responsibility for oversight of the controversial National DNA Database.

Members of the CCTV industry were tipped off about the formation of the CCTV Regulator last month at an invitation only event (the Global MSC Security Seminar) in Newcastle, the press release[4] of which states:

[..] Garry Parkins, Consultant to the National CCTV Strategy Board, outlined to delegates the preferred proposal of the National CCTV Strategy Board, for implementing recommendation 1 of the national CCTV strategy [...] Delegates attending the seminar, held in partnership with Safe Newcastle and supported by the Government Office for the North East (GONE), were given a 'last chance' to contribute and influence the preferred proposal.

Note that the CCTV industry is offered a "last chance" to "contribute and influence" the CCTV Regulator, whilst there has been no public consultation, no parliamentary debate and the vast majority of the people in the UK have no idea that there is a National CCTV Strategy at all.

Security industry groups like the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) and the Security Industry Association (SIA) have been involved in the formation of the CCTV Regulator. In January 2008 Pauline Nostrom, Chairman of the CCTV section of the BSIA was appointed to the group responsible for the implementation of the National CCTV Strategy (the National CCTV Strategy Programme Board). Nostrom is also a member of the Board of Directors of AD Group (a company selling CCTV solutions) where she is Director of Worldwide Marketing.

The commercial value of the surveillance camera industry was underlined in a report of this year's Global MSC Security Seminar on the Safer Newcastle[5] website, which proclaims:

The CCTV industry in the UK has experienced continued growth in recent years. In 2004 it was worth an estimated £568 million and this is expected to rise to an estimated £700 million in 2009. It is thought that there are over 1.5 million CCTV cameras in operation in Britain, although certain studies show this figure to be higher; some estimates reaching 4.2 million cameras.

The National CCTV Strategy is about the removal of decision making from the democratic process, consulting with the surveillance industry rather than the people, disregarding extensive peer reviewed studies such as the Campbell Collaboration Review of CCTV[3] that found: "CCTV schemes in city and town centers and public housing [...] did not have a significant effect on crime", fabricating supportive evidence through meaningless statistics such as number of arrests and twiddles of the joystick, and ultimately the creation of a network of cameras linked to multiple databases capable of facial, gait and behavioural recognition. That is if we let proponents of CCTV push ahead unhindered.

In January 1961 American president Dwight D. Eisenhower gave a famous speech[6] warning of the dangers of the 'Military-Industrial Complex'. His words have strong resonance today and can be extended to the ever growing Surveillance-Industrial Complex in the UK. Eisenhower warned:

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

It is true to say that "only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry" can protect us from the excesses of the surveillance state. The wider public urgently needs to get informed about the ever growing surveillance network (CCTV is but one part) and start asking questions before yet more of their tax pounds are wasted on technologies that do little more than remove their freedoms. To this end No CCTV will shortly be announcing the creation of a National Anti-CCTV Strategy. Watch this space

-- ENDS --

[See Page 3 for references and notes to editors]

References:

[1] See Written Ministerial Statement at <http://www.epolitix.com/> or <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091215/wmsindx/91215-x.htm>

[2] The Nation CCTV Strategy - <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/cctv/National%20CCTV%20Strategy%20Oct%202007.pdf>

[3] The Campbell Collaboration. 'Effects of Closed Circuit Television Surveillance on Crime' - http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/news_/CCTV_modest_impact_on_crime.php

[4] Global MSC Security Seminar Press Release - <http://www.globalmsc.net/documents/Press%20Release%20-%20Newcastle%2009%20V1.3%20261109.pdf>

[5] Safer Newcastle website report of seminar - http://www.newcastle.com/core.nsf/a/pr_cctv_conference_2009

[6] Eisenhower speech 1961 - <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html>

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. No CCTV is a UK group campaigning against the excessive use of surveillance cameras in the UK. Their homepage is at www.no-cctv.org.uk

2. For further information contact Charles Farrier on press@no-cctv.org.uk