

FROM: NO CCTV

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Attn: News Desks
Political, Home Affairs Correspondents

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As Lords slam CCTV, campaign group No CCTV calls for unbreachable boundaries to protect the citizen from unnecessary intrusions of the state

Today the House of Lords Constitution Committee published the final report of their Inquiry into Surveillance and Data Collection [1]. The report entitled 'Surveillance: Citizens and the State' observes that: "There has been a profound and continuous expansion in the surveillance apparatus of both the state and the private sector".

In the press release that accompanied the report Lord Goodlad, Chairman of the House of Lords Constitution Committee, said:

"The UK now has more CCTV cameras and a bigger National DNA Database than any other country. There can be no justification for this gradual but incessant creep towards every detail about us being recorded and pored over by the state."

The committee notes that even police like Graeme Gerrard (Deputy Chief Constable of the Cheshire Constabulary and Chair of ACPO's CCTV Working Group) acknowledge that CCTV is not nearly as effective as many would have us believe:

"The evidence and academic research that I have seen says it is very effective in places like car parks ... but in terms of our town centres, where a lot of the behaviour is violent or disorderly ... often fuelled by alcohol, people are not thinking rationally, they get angry and the CCTV camera is the last thing they think about and even the presence of police officers does not deter them ... In terms of reducing crime there are mixed results ... there was some quite good indication that it reduces the public's fear of crime."

The committee unfortunately did not pick up on the research that shows CCTV does not reduce fear of crime and suggests that in many cases cameras actually increase fear [2].

The committee recommends "that the Home Office commission an independent appraisal of the existing research evidence on the effectiveness of CCTV in preventing, detecting and investigating crime". This seems strange as in 2002 the Home Office commissioned Home Office Research Study 252 'Crime prevention effects of closed circuit television: a systematic review'[3] which did exactly that and found that:

"Overall, the best current evidence suggests that CCTV reduces crime to a small degree. CCTV is most effective in reducing vehicle crime in car parks, but it had little or no effect on crime in public transport and city centre settings."

The report also calls for regulation of CCTV in the public and private sector and a code of practise that is legally binding.

Charles Farrier of NO CCTV said: "Whilst regulation may seem like a sensible approach there is a danger that it will simply add legitimacy to ever expanding camera surveillance. We feel that such regulation must also define clear unbreachable boundaries to protect the citizen from unnecessary and excessive intrusions of the state".

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References:

[1] The report can be downloaded at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldconst.htm#reports>

[2] Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report 'Why are fear and distrust spiralling in twenty-first century

Britain?', see <http://www.jrf.org.uk/node/3731>

[3] <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors252.pdf>

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. From April 2007 the House of Lords Constitution committee held an inquiry into surveillance and data collection in the UK.
3. The committee's homepage is at http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/lords_constitution_committee.cfm
4. For further information contact Charles Farrier press@no-cctv.org.uk