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eTips and Traps: Hoarding of license plate scans a police state tactic

Bill Murray, Published 12:00 am, Sunday, March 4, 2012

Humans are scanned for inferior genes in the science fiction film Gattaca.

Corporate bosses and other authorities make sure citizens occupy their proper social class and employment in society. Those with inferior genes are placed in menial jobs. They are called "In-Validis."

Here in Connecticut, police scanned more than 2.1 million license plates in 2011. The data - being stored indefinitely - allows anyone to track the whereabouts of innocent civilians.

The "Live Free Or Die" state, New Hampshire, bans such hoarding of data by government. Maine theoretically compels police to dump the data after three weeks.

What is Connecticut doing about it? Nothing. This is a dereliction of duty by the Legislature in its oversight function.

Here's how the system works. The cruiser or unmarked police car has all your information displayed on his dashboard computer screen. The camera on the front of the police vehicle reads and scans your license plate, then the data is run through a **Department of Motor Vehicles** computer.

Government can use the travel data to determine what church or what kind of political rallies you attend, what types of social activities you prefer.

The **American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut** has proposed deletion of the data after two weeks. However, a ranking member of the Legislature's **Judiciary Committee** told **the Associated Press** there are no plans to act on the proposal.

We wonder how long it will be before the data is used for more than simple car registration compliance or other legitimate law enforcement purposes. The government has a long tradition of spying on law-abiding citizens including peace

activists, union organizers and - more recently, college students who happen to be Muslims.

All too often, law enforcement is used for political purposes or as a tool for corporations. The "In-Valid" are easy targets of an invasive government.

When you lose a cell phone, good luck getting cops to look for it. When an Apple Corporation employee left a next generation iPhone in a bar, police seized computers and other equipment from a tech blogger who wrote about the missing phone.

Sony Corporation has also been successful getting law enforcement to do its bidding, raiding the homes of gamers who have modified PS3 Playstation. At the same time, Sony has been unable to protect credit card data of its customers.

It's not as if law enforcement or corporate databases are the safest places to store information. Hacker groups like Anonymous routinely penetrate these sites, sometimes in retaliation for the prosecution of whistleblowers.

Until legislators get educated about electronic data and step up to conduct proper oversight, the citizens they are supposed to serve will remain in great peril.

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