

Britain's parliament rubber stamps police state surveillance law

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19 July 2014

The vote to fast track into legislation the Data Retention and Investigative Powers Act (DRIP) by Britain's Parliament provides stark warning of the extent to which the structures for police states are being prepared in Europe.

The law gives the UK government new sweeping powers of surveillance, compelling Internet and phone companies to store all the communications data of British citizens, generated by phone calls, email, texts and Internet use, for 12 months, and make it freely accessible to police and intelligence agencies.

To this end, any semblance of democratic norms was jettisoned to ensure that the legislation was railroaded through Parliament in just three days this week.

In what amounts to a political conspiracy, the governing Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition stitched up a backroom deal with the Labour Party to rubber stamp legislation that has the gravest implications for civil liberties.

In only a few hours, the overwhelming majority of MPs voted by 436 in favour of the new bill. Just a handful of MPs voted against and were given 47 minutes to submit amendments.

Labour MP Tom Watson, who voted against, described events as “democratic banditry, resonant of a rogue state”. “The people who put this shady deal together should be ashamed”, he said. In fact, only 22 Labour MPs were amongst the 49 opposing the legislation, as Watson's own party played the key role in ensuring the success of this foul plot.

The forcing into law of this draconian legislation, without any consent or mandate from the British people, is symptomatic of the ruling elite's contempt for even basic parliamentary procedures.

It reveals the unbridgeable chasm between the broad mass of the population and a political establishment

that has fully renounced any commitment to bourgeois democratic traditions. In the case of Britain, the democratic structures being done away with were established over centuries, going back to the Magna Carta of 1215.

Working people must urgently take stock of the situation. The ruling class in Britain, along with their counterparts internationally have come a long way in establishing the legal framework for dictatorial rule.

One year ago this week intelligence operatives, instructed by the British government, went to the *Guardian*'s London office and oversaw the destruction of hard drives containing encrypted files from the US National Security Agency (NSA) whistle-blower Edward Snowden. Just prior to this the government threatened to close the *Guardian* if the Snowden material was not destroyed.

A few weeks later David Miranda, the partner of then *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, was unlawfully detained for nine hours and his possessions seized at Heathrow Airport, in an operation approved at the highest levels of the US/UK governments.

Such was their response to Snowden's courageous exposures that London and Washington were conducting mass, illegal surveillance of the world's population.

In passing the DRIP legislation, the Cameron government claimed the surveillance powers were required to target jihadist forces operating in Syria. That such forces exist at all is solely due to their promotion and financing by the major powers as the spearhead of their imperialist proxy war in Syria.

Cameron's lying justification exposes the connection between a foreign policy of war and militarism and the assault on democratic rights at home. Yet again the “war on terror” has been employed to provide a pseudo-

legal cover for massive spying operations, while handing even greater powers of censorship and repression to the state; powers which far outstrip those of Hitler's Nazi Germany.

The putrefaction of democratic forms of rule in Britain, where parliamentary governance originated, is the sharpest manifestation of an international phenomenon. Everywhere the same processes of a massive build-up of state powers are underway.

Documents recently made public by Snowden reveal the vast scale of the surveillance powers granted by the Obama administration to the NSA's spying operation at home and abroad.

In France, the ruling Socialist Party is similarly ramming through legislation giving the authorities special powers to spy on the population and censor web sites.

The disintegration of bourgeois democratic rule globally arises fundamentally from the breakdown of the capitalist system. The maintenance of civil liberties is incompatible with unprecedented levels of social inequality and the division of the world between a super-rich minority and the mass of humanity who live in ever deepening poverty.

That is why, while the ruling elite claim repressive powers are necessary to deal with whomever they deem to be the latest "terrorist" threat, their real target is the working class. The vast array of security measures being consolidated in every country are the means through which the bourgeoisie intends to defend its class rule against workers and youth outraged by worsening attacks on their jobs, wages, living standards and the destruction of their social rights to health, housing and education.

A recent paper by the European Union Institute for Security Studies headed, "Perspectives for European Defense 2020", set this out explicitly.

It defines as one of the main tasks of future military deployments to be the "protection of the rich of this world from the tensions and problems of the impoverished..."

"As the proportion of the world population that is impoverished and frustrated continues to increase", it correctly forecasts that "the tensions between this world and the world of the rich will increase—with corresponding consequences."

The imposition of police state forms of rule is by no

means inevitable. What events in Britain have shown, however, is that this cannot be prevented outside of a direct challenge to the existing political and economic set-up.

The one force that can conduct this struggle is the international working class. The safeguarding of even the most elementary democratic rights is inseparable from the fight for socialism.

This requires that the working class mobilise independently of the bourgeoisie and all its political representatives by building the revolutionary socialist party—the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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