

29 June 1970

Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr.
The U. S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Ervin,

The major story in yesterday's New York Times, "Federal Computers Amass Files on Suspect Citizens," underlines the single-handed effort that you have been making to alert the country to the peril of the Government's mass surveillance system.

I am immensely grateful to you, Sir, for your courageous and principled stand and I am certain that the millions of Americans who oppose the police-state practices in which the Government has increasingly indulged also feel gratitude and admiration for your campaign against this pernicious totalitarian procedure.

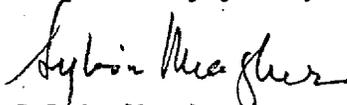
The likelihood that the Government can be compelled to abandon this policy of mass surveillance, now that it is firmly installed, seems to me to be exceedingly remote. But it seems to me that there is, nevertheless, a course of action which would effectively disrupt and even destroy this computerized evil: we must all be certain to get "into" the data bank, all 200 million of us, so that it will become virtually useless. If we are all on record as opposed to the war, opposed to invasion of our personal privacy, and opposed to infringement of our civil liberties and human rights, the data-banks will be so overloaded as to become meaningless. This may seem simplistic, but by the very virtue of its simplicity, it just may work where other remedies fail.

That you are sounding the alarm to a nearly empty Senate chamber, as the Times reports, is a matter for disappointment and dismay. I am sending a copy of this letter to Senators Jacob Javits and Charles Goodell, to indicate that I (and many other of their constituents) strongly urge them to support your position on this invidious mass surveillance and will be guided in the senatorial elections by their response on this over-riding issue.

I enclose herewith a memorandum further elaborating certain aspects of the question of federal mass surveillance, which I hope will commend itself to your attention and consideration.

With renewed thanks and support,

Respectfully yours,


Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

Copies to:

Senator Jacob Javits
Senator Charles Goodell