

Governments taking liberties in the pursuit of 'liberty'

By Lyla Miklos

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"Any society that would give up a little liberty to gain a little security will deserve neither and lose both". American Revolutionary leader Benjamin Franklin said these apt and timely words over 200 years ago. Sadly, Franklin's ideals have been completely forgotten by the current US President.

Recently, a Canadian truck driver phoned in to Cross Country Check-Up on CBC Radio and noted that since 9/11 he is now not only asked his country of citizenship, but also his country of birth and even the birth country of his parents by US border guards at the Canada/US border.

These disturbingly racist questions by US border guards stem from a law passed by the US Senate shortly after 9/11 called The USA Patriot Act (<http://www.lifeandliberty.gov>) - "An act to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes". This act is scary stuff! Every civil liberty and right to privacy any citizen of or visitor to the USA used to have has been completely thrown out the window and all in the name of "security". Scarier still, President Bush asked his government to renew this act in his 2004 State of the Union Address.

So much for "the unalienable right, of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Americans should be reminded of the sentence in The US Declaration of Independence

(http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/declaration_transcript.html) that follows those words: "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it".

Before we Canadians start our usual rounds of self-congratulations on how superior we are to Americans, make sure you check out The Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/A-11.7/index.html>) - "an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Official Secrets Act, the Canada Evidence Act, the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) Act and other Acts, and to enact measures respecting the registration of charities, in order to combat terrorism".

It's time we all ask ourselves if throwing away our freedom truly makes us safer.