

Big Brother watching our every move!

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?No system of mass surveillance has existed in any society that we know of to this point that has not been abused.?
??Edward Snowden

Gone are the dark days of the Cold War.

The Orwellian future of bleak, government-controlled surveillance never materialized. Or so we thought.

The western world has embraced our smart technology and in just one short decade, we've each gone from relative obscurity to international fame.

We're connected to everyone else on the planet who has access to the same technology. We're immediately hooked up to headlines, information and knowledge.

We are no longer alone in cyberspace.

We beehivers in the west go about our business armed with phones the size of our palms and tablets that do everything but make us breakfast. Scratch that, with the latest app, we can have our breakfast delivered before we finishing brushing our teeth.

Most would say that's a very good thing, and just one of the advantages that modern technology and commerce have to offer.

Undoubtedly, there are hundreds of reasons to trust and rely on current technology. The bulk of it just makes our lives easier. We can go from point A to point B without ever getting lost. We can order concert tickets from our phone and even translate a foreign language in seconds. We can watch videos and listen to music any time, any place. We can chat with loved one oceans away.

Yes, modern technology and access granted to us by the tech giants has turned each of us into astute bipeds, roaming about with our heads down, affixed to a screen.

Even at today's level of artificial intelligence, it's possible to never leave the comforts of your home. You can order in virtually everything you need ? groceries, alcohol, cigarettes, entertainment, clothes, toys and DVDs. If there's ever a technological glitch, it can be fixed by a technician, thousands of miles away, in a matter of minutes.

We can work remotely from our home office. We can enjoy virtual dates, group chats and group video games. We can engage in e-learning, study, pass tests and earn diplomas, while still in our pyjamas!

The future is here, my friends. And we're still advancing, at unprecedented speeds. We're charting new territory on a monthly basis. Work has been progressing on automated systems for many years. Soon we will have self-driving cars on the roads; driverless taxis and buses; an end to teller services at banks; even androids employed to do menial tasks.

Yes, anyone reading this will likely see such things in the next few years.

Many of us can't wait to embrace even more technology. We love the idea of living out what was once considered science fiction. But for those well versed in futuristic stories, we need to take heed. George Orwell, back in 1949, warned us that Big Brother will govern our very actions, by as early as 1984. While he may have been a couple of decades off, his lessons are still valid, perhaps even more so today.

?Yes, you are under surveillance. Yes, it is odious. Yes, it should bother you. And yes, it's hard to know how to avoid it.?

??Nick Harkaway

Nick is quite right. We are being watched, in shopping malls, banks, ABMs, intersections, airports, elevators, office buildings, sports venues, schools and by our fellow citizens.

There's facial recognition programs that can you pick you out of a crowd of Waldos in seconds.

Our phones and smart watches can be tracked so our exact location can be pinpointed at any time.

Our movements and even spending habits have been monitored for years, so it's really nothing new. We simply ignore it for the most part.

A bank or credit card company knows your spending patterns and raises a red flag when they see an unusual purchase or location pop up. My wife and I have received phone calls from our credit card companies, asking if we indeed made a certain purchase on a certain date.

But, think about this. By monitoring your spending, Big Brother knows if you're on a diet; whether you're lactose intolerant; are sexually active or even have a disease or ailment. They know when you've last been to the hospital and what was done during that visit. They know what type of movies you like and where you buy your clothes and shoes. They can likely tell us if we're eating too much red meat.

This is not science fiction. Okay, maybe there's no one sitting in front of a computer monitor watching our every move. But it won't be too far down the road, where all surveillance devices, cameras and computers are linked and monitor all human activity on the planet.

Many people today have given up their home phones, opting only for cell phones for their entire family.

How many of us text or Facetime our kids, when they're right upstairs in their rooms?

There's a lot to be said for being ?off the grid.??Funny that we've actually created a term for something that humans are meant to do.

There is a growing movement in the west to unplug ourselves from the rest of the world. When I'm overburdened by telemarketers, calls from service providers and fed up with paying our mortgage, I?often wonder what it would be like to take off and live in a tree house in the woods or a tropical jungle.

This window of opportunity still exists. But one day soon we won't be able to get ?off the grid.?

I wonder if Big Brother is reading this and can see the look on my face right now!