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From: ☹ "enidbrea" <[queeniefound@h...](mailto:queeniefound@h...)>

Date: Mon Mar 17, 2003 7:02 pm

Subject: A message from Ingrid Newkirk

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Recently, animal rights groups and even our own staff have reported incidents of harassment and information gathering expeditions by the FBI and Homeland Security, even by local police.

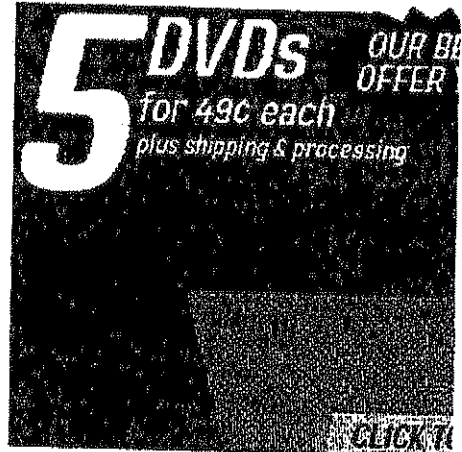
The incident below shows one way this works:

An FBI agent, who at first did not identify himself as such, made a call to one of our staff whose name he had simply read in the paper, assuring her that she was "not in any trouble" and asking her to call him back.

Quite properly, she did not. It is dangerous to engage in even the most innocuous-seeming discourse with the FBI/ Homeland Security/ a local detective for, rest assured, if you do, you will become a notation in a federal file! The next day, the agent called her at home on her private number at 7:45 a.m. "to chat." She properly told him she had nothing to chat with him about and told him not to call her at work or home again. That ended it.

As you may know, the FBI has a massive current investigation into the ALF and ELF and, by default, as with McCarthyism, into the entire animal rights community. As new Homeland Security laws make clear, law enforcement is using the climate of fear of real domestic terrorists to collect information on perfectly law-abiding animal rights activists. We should not allow this to happen in what is still supposed to be a free country. There is now a central data bank set up as a resource in the event of any break-in or liberation, i.e. to use to conduct a witch hunt, to harass and intimidate ordinary people. Don't think this can't happen, because it already has. Most importantly, please don't contribute to it.

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Many scholars have written regarding social cause movements, like the civil rights movement and the peace movements and the FBI's crude and sometimes downright illegal tactics in dealing with them. PETA itself has a history of FBI and ATF harassment. We suffered through (successfully) defeating subpoenas to examine our membership and volunteer lists, and many of us were compelled to give handwriting samples and photographs and to appear before grand juries without lawyers present. Wire taps were put on our telephones (dollars to doughnuts they are there again now, and that's not being paranoid, just practical), our telephone records were seized at source, and the postal authority turned over our mail for pre-sorting. All this happened because, unable to come up with real evidence and pinpoint anyone in particular, the FBI set out to "troll" through the most outspoken animal rights group and see if they turned up anything. Doesn't sound very much like the America we know and love, but there you are.

I don't say any of this to alarm you, for you will probably never receive any communication from the FBI/Homeland Security/local law enforcement but to warn you that if you do, it is not at all smart to think you can outwit them, convert them, or just give them "harmless" information and they'll go away. By allowing an FBI agent to write in his book, "Spoke for 20 mins to (your name here)." instead of "She has nothing to say," you have helped keep the chain alive. If you talk to them, they write things like "(your name here) confirmed that she 'knows all about the ALF' and is familiar with the recent mink liberation," when, in fact, you simply answered "Yes" to the question "Do you know what the ALF is?" and "Yes, I read about it in a newspaper clipping" to the question "What do you know about the mink liberation?" If you invite them in, talk to them, and so on, you will almost certainly be used in the future.

One reason people disregard this advice is because the first reaction most of us have is to think "well, we have nothing to hide, so what's the harm?" Or, my favorite, "But, they seemed so nice!" How far would they get with us if they said, "I hate animals" or "I'm out to get you?" One of our staff recounts how an FBI agent came and sat next to him when he was detained after a protest. The agent was very friendly, slouched in his chair and called the police who had been at the demo, "jerks." He acted as if he and our staffer were old friends and casually asked our fellow for his name, his age, how long he'd worked at PETA, if he traveled much in his work, if "higher ups" decided how a demo was going to go. When our person said he wasn't answering and would need to speak to an attorney, the FBI agent acted offended and said, "Wow, we were just having a conversation here." He then told our staffer that he'd heard him on the radio and that "you were articulate, fantastic. That one caller - he was an idiot." When it was clear he wasn't going to get answers, he left the room.

Here is exactly what seasoned attorneys suggest most strongly that you do if approached by an FBI agent, other Homeland Security or other law enforcement officer: who wants to "just chat:" Say politely but firmly and without hesitation, "I have nothing to say" and then hang up, walk away, close the door. Do not be coerced or charmed into helping them by "just answering a few easy questions." If anyone tries to detain you, ask "Am I under arrest?" If they cannot say "yes," you are free to go. Walk or drive away.

If they ring or knock or approach you again, say "Please leave me

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alone. You are harassing me." Say nothing more. It seems rude, but law enforcement officers are used to hearing it and won't take it personally. They will go away. If you converse with them you will be called/visited again.

In light of the constitution, you have the freedom to associate with whomever you choose, and the right to say what you believe in without fear of reprisal, and they have no right to harass those who object to exploitation, war, racial discrimination, animal slavery and the like.

Thank you.  
Ingrid Newkirk

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