

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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Edward Snowden: American Hero or Benedict Arnold?

There is currently a controversy over Edward Snowden's decision to reveal that the U.S. government has been engaging in widespread spying on its own citizens. Some people call him a whistle blower and a hero while others want him prosecuted for treason.

Over 400 years ago the King of England created "The Star Chamber," which has been defined in Black's Law Dictionary 9th edition (2004), p. 1537, as:

"An English court having broad civil and criminal jurisdiction at the king's discretion and noted for its secretive, arbitrary and oppressive procedures including compulsory self-incrimination, inquisitorial investigation and the absence of juries. The Star Chamber was abolished in 1641 because of its abuses of power."

In the ensuing centuries the term "Star Chamber" has been used repeatedly by attorneys and judges to denote lapses in the principles of liberty and justice upon which our government is based.

Now, under the pretense of protecting us from terrorism, we are all subject to Star Chamber methods by secret government agencies who operate behind the scenes to deprive us of a free and open society. These agencies are so secret that we are not even allowed to know they exist and that they are invading our privacy on a daily basis.

Say what you will about Edward Snowden. One thing's for sure, if he had not come forward to tell us that our government was spying on us, the government would still be denying that it was doing so. The debate should not be about Edward Snowden but the widespread secrecy that permeates the government.

In my opinion, when we are told that we have to forfeit our liberties as a precondition to being kept safe from terrorists, then the terrorists have already won.