

Police

• This article is more than **14 years old**

Letters

Police spies lost in a moral maze

Fri 21 Jan 2011 00.07 GMT

We note that the police minister Nick Herbert has ordered a "clean-up" of covert policing ([Report](#), 19 January). As committed "domestic extremists", we demand that he does likewise for Acpo's "overt" spying on peaceful protesters, whereby it has systematically and secretly logged their personal data and our own on a database ([Most wanted: man classified 'domestic extremist' by police is 85-year-old artist](#), 26 June).

The sudden announcement of a flurry of police investigations into Acpo is too little too late, and the role of the previous Labour government, under whose watch Big Brother took shape, should be seriously examined.

The fact that the National Public Order Intelligence Unit looks set to come under the control of the Met police sends shivers down our spines, as it will amount to little more than the same thing dressed in a different uniform. After all, this is the force behind the brutal policing of recent student protests, and the deaths of Jean Charles de Menezes and Ian Tomlinson.

In the wake of the [Mark Kennedy](#) revelations, and Acpo's attempts to install cameras in Muslim neighbourhoods of Birmingham, it beggars belief that Acpo will be entrusted with any functions at all, let alone a national police information and co-ordination centre, a national community tension team and TruckPol, a vehicle-crime intelligence service.

John and Linda Catt

Brighton

- George Monbiot compared the activities of the environmentalists favourably with animal rights activists, but I don't see much difference ([Eco-terrorism: the non-existent threat we spend millions policing](#), 18 January). Does he think that closing down a power station, which would have put at risk hospitals, care homes, schools and the general population, was not a major threat? The police are there to keep the peace, not to make judgments about moral causes. Monbiot seems to have missed that point.

Liz Strutt

Brighton

- Given that the fuel blockades of 10 years ago caused more disruption to Britain than every environmental protest this century put together, I look forward to hearing how many undercover policemen are currently working within the road haulage industry. If the answer is none, then all of the justifications for infiltrating environmental protest groups fall apart. Perhaps the undercover policemen involved thought so too, which might explain why so many of them seem to have formed emotional bonds with those they were sent to spy on ([Officer married activist he was sent to spy on](#), 20 January).

Dr Richard Milne

Edinburgh

- So, police officers are "banned from having sexual relationships with their targets". MI5 seems to have had a slightly different approach. In *Spycatcher*, Peter Wright stated that officers could not be infiltrated into organisations like the Socialist Workers party (SWP) "since many of them lived promiscuous lives, and there were some sacrifices even an MI5 officer would not make".

Ian Birchall

London

- The late Tony Cliff, leading light of the SWP, had a clear position on undercover police infiltration. He used to say: "It's inevitable that some of you will come across people you suspect of being police informers. Don't let them know you suspect. They are always the best organisers, the best paper sellers, and the first ones to turn up to a paper sale outside the factory at 6.30am in the pouring rain."

Philip Foxe

London

- The cases of undercover police officers who have infiltrated various green campaigns and then acted unprofessionally by forming relationships with

genuine activists is deplorable and requires a public investigation. At the same time, the harm done has been, while genuine, limited. The activities of the original government agent provocateur, Oliver the Spy (WJ Richards), in the years before Peterloo in 1819 led to the hanging of several radicals he had drawn in.

Keith Flett

London

Most viewed