

Philosophical Musings - Privacy

Whatever happened to privacy? The **human right** to privacy has been enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* promulgated and adopted in the United Nations General Assembly on the 10th of December 1948. Article 12 of that Declaration promises:

“No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.”

Forty-eight countries voted in favor on the day (0 voted against and 8 abstained).

Those who would infringe on our privacy often use the nothing to hide, nothing to fear assertion as a reason for giving up privacy. It is used to intimidate in order to meet an agenda or achieve an objective but in actuality has no foundation in reality. It implies that hiding something or keeping something secret is somehow criminal or bad – it is not. Intimidation is the name of this game! The linkage privacy and criminality is not germane and has not been proven. All an individual can do for protection is provide the minimum of requested data (to whatever requester) and not engage with Google, Facebook and Microsoft – all of whom demand permission to access your personal data before granting access to their product. In the main, refusing to provide the requisite permission would be unacceptable to most people.

Choosing to keep information private is everyone’s human right. Cardinal Richelieu has been quoted as saying:

“If you give me six lines written by the hand of the most honest of man, I will find something in them which will hang him”.

Governments today are, as a matter of routine, actually invasively capture citizen data and store it indefinitely. Richelieu’s words will prove true wherever that occurs.

Some points to ponder:

- What do you consider private?
- Would you read someone else’s email, word documents, spreadsheet files?
- Would you post someone else’s private files?
- If you could listen to other’s email or chat conversations would you?
- What would you do if you thought your conversations were being listened to?

What can we do when providing requested personal data:

- Be careful who you provide your information to.
- Find out why they want it.
- Find out what it will be used for.
- Find out who else will have access to it.
- Find out if your information will be on sold.

We are all the victims in this game – victims of the data brokers who collect our personal data and sell it at a profit – mostly WITHOUT our permission or knowledge and victims of those who will breach the data brokers’ security. All security can be breached and these entities make very attractive targets – i.e. Equifax.

The outlook is bleak. The European Union has pretty good privacy law and is doing something in this space; however, nothing is being done here in the US. Australia has passed a Draconian law recently that

requires individuals to produce their encryption keys when directed to do so. Do not take a computing device to Australia. They do not respect your privacy.