

# The *Informed Electorate*



Patriots Ink

## Everybody Does it.

~ Patriot's Ink Staff Writer

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In a recent news interview, I heard a man who had used his access at the NSA to spy on his girlfriend defend himself by saying that “Everybody does it.” It reminded me of numerous prior sound bites, quotes, and video clips in which politicians and other government agents defended their actions with the same excuse. There was one that occurred very recently in which a Senator endorsed a candidate who just happened to have hired the advertising agency that the Senator owned to promote the candidate’s campaign. The Senator’s response when asked about it was that “Everybody does it” and that was that.

These stories then it reminded me of the time that I told my grandmother that I had done something wrong because my older brother had done it. “But Mikey did it” didn’t work with her and “Everybody does it” shouldn’t work with the American people.

In the instance of the NSA, the law as passed specifically prohibited the examination of the data that had been collected without a search warrant. But people with no respect for the law broke it and checked on their wives’ and girlfriends’ phone records to see if they were cheating. The unanticipated repercussions include a very irritated public and at least two US Senators. Their irritation, however, is not incisive enough to differentiate between a bad person and a bad law and now the good parts of the law are in jeopardy. The irritation with the law itself is warranted, at least in part, by the fact that the wayward agents were not fired, nor arrested. They were reprimanded. “Everybody does it” had worked. The people opposed to the law say that the men couldn’t have spied if they didn’t have the opportunity. I found that to be pretty weak. In fact it smacks of other weak excuses like “she shouldn’t wear pearls in this part of town - it’s her fault that I robbed her.”

We see the same parallel in recent news regarding the Secret Service. Over the past several years there have been more than one instance of Secret Service agents putting the services of wayward ladies on their government credit cards. The IRS agents were discovered having lavish parties using the government credit cards to pay for them.

Perhaps the worst example of “Everybody does it” occurs in the violation of the prohibition

against warrantless searches and seizures. When a police officer conducts an improper search or seizes something without authorization, the general response is that he made a mistake - "Everybody does it." Maybe there is a reprimand in his record, maybe not.

Lamenting about this situation, I then realized that I had been wrong in my presumption that "Everybody does it" may be a valid excuse.

Everybody doesn't do it. While a few corrupt agents or politicians or policemen can get away with it, we can't. If I obtained the services of a young lady for hire - even using my own credit card - I could be arrested. If I listened to my girlfriend's telephone conversations without permission or read her text's, I could be in big trouble - it's an invasion of privacy. It's not a fourth amendment invasion, because I am not the government, but I bet I would get sued. I'd certainly need a new girlfriend. Not because it's illegal - but because it's wrong. Ask my grandmother.