

An Accurate Prediction? **by Ileza Dantzig**

In George Orwell's classic *1984* he imagines what life will be like in the year 1984. He goes into much depth about the government, and he predicts the ways in which it will be run in our future. Orwell completely disengages from his predictions the idea of liberty. He suggests that the future of our country will be controlled in a manner where liberty and other basic freedoms will not be a concern. *1984* is an accurate prediction of government surveillance in the current United States.

“Stupidity was as necessary as intelligence, and as difficult to attain” (229). The party that Orwell creates in his book centers around three slogans, one being “ignorance is strength.” This quotation from the book and one of the main party slogans connect in that they both describe intelligence as a bad thing in Orwell's society. Though today in our society we value knowledge and mental growth, there are many gaps in our knowledge and much is out of our control. Shortly following 9/11 in the United States, President Bush issued an act titled USA Patriot Act (“Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism”). While at times this act may prove to keep us safe, it often has few positive effects on our lives. One part of the act makes it difficult to distinguish the line between intelligence gathering and gathering evidence for a possible attack. This means that while a person gathers evidence in order to gain intelligence, at times the government assumes that the person is planning an attack. It is in this example, that ignorance is strength. *1984* is an accurate prediction of government surveillance in the current United States because in both societies no distinct change is occurring, therefore leaving the citizens quite powerless.

Our presumed democratic society may not want us to fully understand the acts that are in effect all around us, so our government often avoids discussing these important issues (i.e.: presidential debates where candidates don't fully answer the questions asked). “Statistics were just as much a fantasy in their original version as in their rectified version. A great deal of the time you were expected to make them up out of your head” (37). In Orwell's book certain topics, many pertaining to freedom and the past, are often ignored. There is no such thing in this world as true history, as it is all re-written in order to satisfy the Party's desires. While the history of our country has not been re-written, certain key issues are tenaciously avoided in order to maintain order as our government sees fit. Because of the Patriot Act, if a person is suspected for any reason as a threat to our country's safety, the government is able to investigate with no questions asked. In fact, interactions between residents of the United States and government officials that involve safety, are not even permitted to be discussed among other members of the society. In *1984* and at times in our current government, it may appear that we are powerless due to our lack of communication with one another.

Our government tended to be a concrete way in which our society was run. In recent years, since the Patriot Act has come into play, there have been questions raised over basic liberties. Are we really a democratic nation in which the majority rules? The

Founding Fathers worked to develop a system of government with three distinct branches, each able to check one another so that none would have too much power. The Patriot Act gives new powers to the Executive branch of government and doesn't allow the court to have much judicial oversight to ensure that these law enforcing powers are not being abused. In *1984* Big Brother and the other main Party leaders are allowed to take control of law enforcement, by means of the Thought Police. One can be convicted of any such crime and there is nobody that can over-rule the conviction. In Orwell's society there is no such thing as a judicial branch, whereas in our society although we have one, the Patriot Act partially impairs the powers that the judicial branch once had. In Orwell's book along with our current society government surveillance limits the power and communication of its citizens, as well as the ability of the government to internally check each of its components.

Although Orwell wrote his book post WWII in 1948, the government that he portrays in his society foreshadows to some extent the government that we live under in the current United States. The book however is an exaggeration. The Patriot Act sounds like a solid way to help protect our country from potential terrorists, but when looked at in depth it tends to take away many of the liberties and guarantees that American citizens once had. Big Brother deceitfully forces its party members to comply with its form of government, but in this Party there are no freedoms at all along with telescreens and Thought Police. The government ideas in *1984* resemble many of the ideas present today in our society.