

Is MoveOn Less Progressive Than the New York Times Editorial Board?

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The New York Times is hardly a progressive newspaper — but when it comes to the surveillance state and ongoing militarism of the Obama White House, the establishment’s “paper of record” puts MoveOn.org to shame.

And so, the same day that the Times editorialized to excoriate President Obama for his latest betrayal of civil liberties, MoveOn sent out a huge email blast sucking up to Obama.

The Times was blunt in its Saturday editorial: “By the time President Obama gave his news conference on Friday, there was really only one course to take on surveillance policy from an ethical, moral, constitutional and even political point of view. And that was to embrace the recommendations of his handpicked panel on government spying — and bills pending in Congress — to end the obvious excesses. He could have started by suspending the constitutionally questionable (and evidently pointless) collection of data on every phone call and email that Americans make.”

But, the newspaper added: “He did not do any of that.”

As the Times [editorial](#) went on to say, “any actions that Mr. Obama may announce next month would certainly not be adequate. Congress has to rewrite the relevant passage in the Patriot Act that George W. Bush and then Mr. Obama claimed — in secret — as the justification for the data vacuuming.”

Let’s reiterate that the Times is far from a progressive outlet. It serves as a highly important megaphone for key sectors of corporate/political elites. Voicing the newspaper’s official stance, its editorials are often deferential to spin and half-truths from favored political figures. And much of the paper’s news coverage feeds off the kind of newspeak that spews out of the Executive Branch and Congress.

But on crucial matters of foreign policy, militarism and surveillance, the contrast between Times editorials and MoveOn is stunning. The “progressive” netroots organization has rarely managed to clear a low bar of independence from reprehensible Obama policies.

Instead, millions of people on MoveOn’s list are continually deluged with emails pretending that Republicans are the only major problem in Washington — while nearly always ignoring Obama administration policies that are antithetical to basic progressive values.

And so, on the same day the New York Times was ripping into Obama’s latest affront to civil liberties and privacy rights, MoveOn was sending out a mass email that began by quoting from Obama’s 2008 convention acceptance speech — as though his five-year record as

president still makes him an apt source of inspiration: "The change we need doesn't come from Washington. Change comes to Washington."

After five years, MoveOn seems not to have noticed what the New York Times editorial board has often pointed out: that some of the change Obama has brought to Washington has not been in a progressive direction. As the Times put it in a [follow-up editorial](#) Sunday, at his latest news conference Obama "insisted that there was no evidence that the phone surveillance program was being abused — a truly disturbing assessment given all the revelations since June."

As usual, the MoveOn email did not include a single word of criticism, much less challenge, of Obama. Instead, the email blamed Congress for all the political obstacles to needed "change."

This is typical. Year after year of the Obama presidency, MoveOn has been routinely silent on such crucial matters as U.S. drone and cruise missile strikes across borders, war in Afghanistan, assaults on press freedom and whistleblowers, and methodical undermining of precious civil liberties.

The intertwined warfare state and surveillance state have little to fear from MoveOn. And that's tragic.

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." Information about the documentary based on the book is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

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