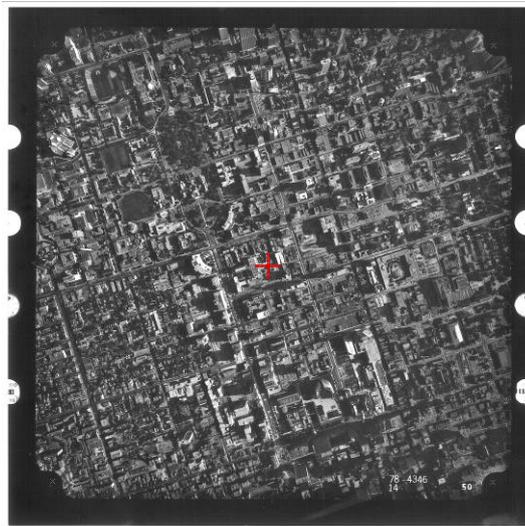


SCREWING WITH THE PUBLIC AT THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES (1983)

From 1982-83, I worked for the Ontario Provincial Ministry of Natural Resources making copies of the high-resolution aerial photos.

As you are probably aware, modern maps are based on aerial photographs produced by large-format cameras mounted on aeroplanes which sweep across the territory to be mapped. To ensure the accurate alignment of the resulting photographs, every (I think it is) twelfth photograph had a red '+' in the middle of the frame.

The Ontario provincial government made these aerial photographs available to members of the public who wanted an aerial photograph of their house, cottage or property. After identifying the image number of the specific photo they wanted, members of the public completed a simple order form, presented it to the clerk, paid the \$2.00 and waited while the order was brought me to produce a high resolution 10" x 10" ITEK print.



aerial photo of downtown Toronto ©Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Queen's Park

One day, a member of the public arrived at the ministry and ordered a copy of the photograph of his house. I made the copy, presented it to him, and was about to return to my workspace when he called me back:

"Excuse me... I say... EXCUSE me...!"

"Yes...?", I replied, returning to the counter to find that he was becoming agitated.

"Why is there a red X on the roof of my house?"

Now, just about every profession has its advantages and opportunities. People who work in restaurants sometimes get free food. People who worked in camera stores used to get free film. People who teach in universities get decent holidays. People who work for the powerful, mysterious and opaque (and all the more powerful for being mysterious and opaque) organs of the state occasionally get opportunities like this one.

"I'm sorry sir; I'm not allowed to tell you."

You may have wondered what it is that prompts people to start wearing aluminium foil hats.

It's people like me.