

## THE PLAGUE OF THE LAW LOCUSTS

Larry Gambone



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We are overwhelmed with a locust-like plague of laws and regulations. There are literally hundreds of thousands of them, forming a black cloud over society. Areas of our lives held sacrosanct for centuries, areas off-limits to tyrants and dictators, are fodder for this pestilence. Consider the following: In many North American municipalities the following activities are now illegal; hanging out washing, owning a pickup truck, yard or garage sales, working out of your house, keeping a pet chicken, having more than two cats. School bake sales have been shut down by inspectors, Christmas carolers arrested, it is illegal to sell homemade jam, and some places you cannot even camp on your own property. There is the “Zero Tolerance” idiocy where schools expel students for making finger guns or having a one-inch penknife. The individual is dragged down and devoured by this hideous cloud of crawling, nibbling regulations.

There are so many of these law locusts you cannot recognize them as individuals. It is impossible to keep track of them all. Who in their right mind would even think that some of these regulations would come to exist in the first place? What this plague does is turn everyone into a criminal. One of the purposes behind criminalisation of normal behavior is control. When everyone is a criminal, everyone is vulnerable and can be gotten at. Laws are always enforced selectively and most are made vague enough to allow this. As but one example, a book shop or gathering place deemed undesirable by the authorities can be closed under the pretext of fire or health regulations. A business deemed harmless but indulging in the same “infractions”, on the other hand, is ignored. But regulation cannot be reduced just to a rational (but authoritarian) desire to control behavior. Some of these laws and regulations (like Zero Tolerance) seem to be the result of minds that are completely unhinged.

Ironically, when a real problem does exist, all these laws are useless. As an example, a friend of mine had a problem with a neighbor who had filled his house with garbage and was attracting rats and mice. The mice invaded my friend’s house by the hundreds. He called the city, the health inspector and several other agencies to have something done

about it, but to no avail. It took two years before the government sent in exterminators and forced the neighbor to clean up his mess.

Many regulations are rationalised away by the supposed need to protect the children. But one of the major reasons children need protection today is that the greater, voluntary protection of living in a community no longer exists. One of the reasons community no longer exists is that it has been eaten away by law locusts. Destruction of voluntarism by regulations increases alienation which undermines community. Furthermore, municipal by-laws segregated work, home and consumption into three separate and often distant geographical areas. Neighborhoods and towns built before the arrival of the Plague, as you still can see in the old parts of cities, integrated the three aspects and thus maintained a sense of community.

The plague is a fact contrary to the received wisdom of the day, by which society has become overly individualistic. Here exists a deliberate confusion of narcissism with individualism. The individualist desires a situation of maximum liberty and a minimum of coercion, while the narcissist is content with a maximum of consumer goods to satisfy every little childish whim and a minimum of voluntary social restraints such as manners and consideration for others. We have a situation in which you can fill your house with pornography (not that I am for re-criminalising it) and yet get busted for hanging your shirt on a line.

Let’s exterminate the locusts! We can’t do much about the WTO and other mega-problems, but we can do something at the local level. (What ever happened to “Think globally, act locally”?) How about mass civil disobedience; masses of people hanging out washing, holding “illegal” yard sales, camp-ins, and armies of “illegal” carol singers? Let’s work to abolish all laws except those pertaining to coercive acts such as theft, fraud, assault and murder. Let’s quarantine society against this evil plague ever arising again by suggesting that any new laws require a three-quarters majority of all citizens before they are passed.