

The Great Gun Debate

Truth-seeking is pure frustration. We begin quite sure something is so, and then discover it's the opposite. The reason for this is that public life in particular is deciphered through stereotypes that haven't much to do with what's really happening. Hence, we end up with shadow policies designed for shadow problems, and the public world we think we know is what a famous critic once called a "pseudo-environment."

The public debate over "gun-control" is a case in point. But perhaps instead of banning guns, what ought to be banned is our foolish and terribly costly national infatuation with a false view of what causes crime. For thirty years our academics, criminologists and penal bureaucrats, faced with a choice between the hard-headed and the soft-headed views of crime causation, have unfortunately chosen the soft.

The hard-headed view says the human species is a calculating one. We all clearly understand the difference between good and evil (that's why even thieves don't steal when they know police are watching). Criminals differ from us not in that they don't know this distinction - but that they don't care. Retributive justice (punishment) is required, not as vengeance, but to right the moral imbalance caused by each crime, and make society whole again.

In contrast, the soft-headed view says that we are all naturally good. Therefore evil comes from outside ourselves. It is caused by a faulty society. Fix society, and you will fix crime. Criminals should not be punished, because they are not responsible. Rather, social programs will fix society, and rehabilitation will fix the criminal.

This is a flattering, easy argument embraced mostly by the lazy-minded who have nothing to lose by being nice to criminals. It is also profoundly opposed to common sense, and to every ethical system and religion on earth. It was bound to have a negative result.

It did. We now have what American writer Samuel Francis describes as "anarcho-tyranny." And that's odd, indeed. After all, how can we have anarchy and tyranny at the same time? Easy. Whole mobs of citizens taught by their culture and in the schools to express their natural desires, and who know they will not be held accountable, riot against society seeking their own form of retribution. It's a kind of soft anarchy. Instead of overthrowing society, they undermine it.

Meanwhile democratic governments, hooked on a belief system that requires the substitution of rehabilitation for punishment, soon become immobilized. Eventually, the law schools and courts become stuffed with feel-good professors and judges addicted to leniency as a form of charity, and versed at twisting the law to favour criminals and tying the hands of police.

But because nothing real can be done about murder or rape ("life" means you could be out in

15 years); or armed students assaulting teachers or each other (caning is out); about drugs, pimping, or pornography on the streets (it's just "free speech"); or about break-ins or assaults (the poor fellow was raised badly, give him a break) - governments desperately spend millions on the "optics" of crime to soothe public anxiety.

They pass draconian seat-belt laws, equip police with space-age sleuthing technology, and buy expensive photo-radar units to charge cars (not people) with crimes. They mount booze brigades at the festive season, so seven officers can openly swarm a drunk driver (while the punks swarm your store, or break into your home without a worry).

Such gelded governments also create a myriad of tribunals to regulate ideas, behaviour, and speech, to control private property, and dictate the micro-details of business hiring, firing, paying and pricing. It's a kind of genteel tyranny. The hope seems to be that by regulating the innocent masses perfectly, everyone will someday be perfectly good. Then there will be no criminals. As this sort of diversionary victimization of the public increases, career criminals become freer to harm or kill again: about 60 per cent of all criminals sent to Canada's provincial and federal prisons every year - have been in jail before. There are plenty of rapists and murderers who soon walk freely from Canadian jails to ply their trade again.

The name of the game, as Francis puts it, "is to avoid performing such basic functions as stopping real crime and to think up purely fictitious functions that will raise revenue, enhance the power of the police or bureaucrats, and foster the illusion that the state is doing its job." It's not, because it can't. And that won't change until, as a people, we decide to preach less about gun control and more about self-control.

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