

Laws Don't Deter Crime, They Create Crime

Not to toot my own horn, but the voluntaryist is in the unique position of having a clear perspective on what laws created by groups of people calling themselves "government" really are. The first point to understand is that laws are an opinion backed by force. The second point to understand is that laws fall under one of two types: 1) those which prohibit crime (aggression), and 2) those which prohibit liberties.

A major superstition maintained by those who believe in government (the state) is that without their laws, criminals will run rampant in the street preying on anybody and everybody who can't personally defend themselves. Laws that prescribe harsh punishments on criminal behavior, it is believed, will deter most people from engaging in a life of crime.

But I don't believe that's true. In fact, I believe the opposite is true: laws don't deter crime, they create crime. How, you ask as you lean forward and rub your chin?

Government law creates crimes in two ways. The first is by creating laws that prohibit liberties. Immediately, anybody who engages in these now prohibited liberties are by definition, committing a crime. As the ink dries on the newly minted law of the land, entire classes of people are labeled as criminal through no fault of their own. It doesn't matter that the liberties in which they engage are peaceful and nonviolent. Such prohibited liberties include things like using recreational drugs, drinking alcohol, operating a business, selling sexual services, braiding hair, feeding the poor, *et cetera*.

The second is related to the first, the prohibition of liberties creates black markets in the provision of now prohibited goods and services. And who is poised to make large sums of money in black markets? Ruthless entrepreneurial types who are less risk averse and more comfortable with the use of violence than others. Can this be denied? Not without denying reality and history.

It's a fact of life, I'm afraid. Government laws do not deter crime, they create it. What deters crime is the likelihood of being shot or stabbed by your victim (or by a vigilante). When society is well armed (either culturally or physically), criminals think twice. Laws prohibiting liberties, including the liberty to adequately defend oneself, should be repealed or left unenforced if society is to rid itself of crime.