

June 15, 2016

## Beggar Thy Philanthropist

Making up petty rules and enforcing them is one thing governments do well.

On Monday I warned about the dangers of asking too much from government. I think, today, I'll make the opposite warning: of not asking enough.

Mandatory seatbelt laws were enacted (sometimes by citizens initiative and referendum) to save people's

lives. But the reason many police and local jurisdictions like these laws is that it gives them a chance to engage in shakedowns, entrapping citizens into non-compliance, and then socking them with fines.

In Regina, Saskatchewan, a man pulled up to an intersection and saw a down-and-outer with a sign. He felt sorry for him, so, as he pulled up, he unbuckled his seat belt and pulled three bucks in change out of his pocket. And dropped the three dollars on the curb.

A few moments later, police stopped him, and handed him a ticket. The "homeless guy" with the sign turned out to have been an undercover cop, and the few moments without a seat belt was enough to charge our philanthropist \$175 Canadian.

Though an obviously preposterous misuse of police time and attention, and an abuse of the citizenry, Regina's police force remains adamant, claiming that "this is nothing new. It's part of a project that has police watching for traffic violations at intersections."

Because this sort of thing only hits a few people almost at random, but the benefits are concentrated on police coffers, it's hard to organize against such nonsense. Which is precisely why such nonsense goes on.

Still, we must prevent such abuse at the local level, if we're ever to control the federal leviathan.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

