



# Harking Back To The Bureaucrats Of Yore

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What with all the scandal in Houston and Washington these days, it would seem that some of our nation's leading executives and government officials have lost something serious, and we're not just talking about billions and billions of dollars. These people have long forgotten what should be innate in all of us: a deathly fear of government bureaucrats.

In defense of Enron and accomplices, however, this has been an unfortunate society-wide trend. Average citizens invite employees of the IRS over for dinner without so much as hiding their valuable art. General Accounting Office workers are not given even a reproachful glance at the local supermarket. What's more, they seem to have many friends outside of the office. The efforts of these agencies to become "user-friendly" and "not universally despised" have proven far too successful. People once intimidated are now growing bold. With agencies gone soft and fuzzy, the corporate chaos has begun.

Mere "laws" are apparently not enough to force corporations to pay the taxes they owe. To solve this, we need to re-install the trouser-soiling fear of government bureaucrats in all U.S. citizens.

The first step for these agencies is to implement a new uniform. Instead of bland, impotent business suits, IRS and GAO agents should be issued long, black, hooded "death shrouds" a la The Seventh Seal. Replacing the more medieval "Scythe of Carnage," which would make air travel a hassle, these agents should carry those enormous Styrofoam prosthetic hands with the large extended pointer finger, the kind one might normally see on the hand of a rowdy sports fan yelling obscenities and sloshing beer around.

Specially modified for government use, the big finger would be bright orange and would read "The Orange Prosthetic Finger of Justice." The length of that phrase should give you an idea of the necessary size of the Finger.

Once the agencies are properly uniformed, the next step is to tackle the attitudes of the bureaucrats themselves. Perhaps one might argue that making government agents more "consumer friendly" would increase efficiency and cut down on the costs of commerce. Nonsense. We must cultivate an attitude of bitter vindictiveness in these people or face economic apocalypse.

One way to motivate them would be to start an incentive plan. Agents would only receive food and toiletries in direct proportion to the number of people and corporations they convince to pay taxes. Throwing in mild to severe electroshocks for use of civilized conversation could stem the dangerous tide of friendliness. Management could post on the walls motivational aphorisms like, "Milk the suckers," "Be a jerk," and the IRS' new corporate motto: "What would a junkyard dog do?" (WWAJDD).

Retrained agents would then be dispatched to locations all across the country, where they would go to the corporate headquarters of all the myriad huge corporations that have managed not to pay federal income taxes for the last several decades. Properly muzzled to prevent unauthorized food intake or biting, the agents would simply find high-level executives and hover over them menacingly, snarling and occasionally extending the dreaded "Orange Prosthetic Finger of Justice" for emphasis.

The GAO could go into "the Cave," hide in the shadows, and then, right as Cheney is about to "consult" with whoever it is that currently dictates US energy policy, just jump out and point the Finger right in his face. It would be like applying a fully charged defibrillator to his weak and sickly conscience.

Cheney may have a conscience somewhere, however undisclosed it may seem. The parties involved in the Enron debacle are probably not intrinsically awful people. Like the rest of us, when it's in their interest, they know the difference between right and wrong. Yet they need to see that it is in their very best interest not to cook the books or to skip out on their taxes. They need, like all of us, the "encouragement" of a fearful force apparently long since departed: the fearsome bureaucrats of yore.