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Thoughts about Discretion and the Law

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."

Proverbs, XXIV, 22

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

Thomas Jefferson

A Citizen: What is the law ?

Robespierre: The will of the people.

A Citizen: We are the people. And we want no law. That's the will of the people.

Herault: Every man has the right to live his life according to his nature. Virtue! A man ought to be virtuous or vile as he chooses, what does it matter to the Republic ? We are all fools --- no fool has the right to say, do as I do. The principle of freedom is: take your pleasure at your own risk, and don't get in anyone else's way while you're doing it.

Georg Buechner

"Of course, the law is the law, you all know that. You all know it, but it's so important I'll say it again, the law is the law. You all know that. And the law was mostly made by wise people, wiser than you and me, very long ago. And once a law is made, why, you naturally have lawbreakers, and so you have to have law enforcers. In this way, many new jobs are created. You take the law of Moses, for example, in the Bible, and the law of Jesus, in the Bible. Those laws don't altogether square with one another right down the line, but that doesn't matter, we Peace Officers know from the moment we put on the uniform that we've got to enforce them both --- whatever they say."

"Now I want to show you girls one or two elementary things about how the Law works. Oh, I know you're clever and educated girls, but there's no substitute for experience. Let's look together at one of the laws we once had, the one called Prohibition. That Law said, to put it simply and in nontechnical terms, Stop Drinking. Well, did people stop drinking ? No, they did not. Of course the vast majority of lawabiding Americans did, but there were a few intellectuals and pinkos, even back then, who would go to any lengths to show how individual they were. And do you know what happened to them ? I'll tell you what happened to them. They let the Syndicate in, that's what happened to them. And they not only got poison booze, they got beaten up --- terrorized --- murdered --- sometimes even put in jail. That's what happens to people who refuse to obey the law. Of course, in that case, when the vast majority of Americans saw what was happening to those poor fellow travelers, they just up and changed the Law so that it wasn't a Law anymore, and didn't have to be enforced by persons like yours truly."

Normal Monad (Capt.)

Vermont Vice & Arson Squad

"The better part of valour is discretion."
Shakespeare

"Individualities may form communities, but it is institutions alone
that can create a nation."
Disraeli

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J.Z.