

Lurking in the Shadows

Written by Bob Alexander

Wednesday, 07 March 2012 23:45 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 March 2012 23:51

I don't care that the retail Christmas season starts earlier and earlier every year. I'm almost continually freaked out that Halloween *hasn't stopped* since December 12th 2000. It's like we're all living in a demented version of the film, Groundhog day. The alarm goes off, we get up, and something horrible happens. All day long we wish we could change *something*

but the next morning ... the alarm goes off, we get up, and something horrible happens.

It's Kafka's world ... we just live in it. With a little bit of H.P. Lovecraft thrown in to ramp up the creep factor.

We can all remember how much fun it was watching the National Defense Authorization Act creep through both Houses of Congress, hoping against hope that Obama wouldn't sign the goddamn piece of paper that would invalidate our Constitution. But he did. Then to prove he wasn't an *extreme* Fascist he added that he *probably* wouldn't use the law he just signed into being. But regardless ... it's there lurking in the shadows waiting ... waiting.

The alarm goes off, we get up, and something horrible happens.

H.R. 347: Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act of 2011

It was introduced on January 19, 2011. This bill passed in the Senate with changes by unanimous Consent on February 6, 2012. The bill passed in the House of Representatives by roll call vote on February 28, 2011. The vote was held under a suspension of the rules to cut debate short and pass the bill, needing a two-thirds majority. This usually occurs for non-controversial legislation. The totals were 399 Ayes, 3 Nays, 30 Present/Not Voting. H.R. 347 was presented to the President on Mar 1, 2012. He hasn't signed it ... yet.

The Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act of 2011 has nothing to do with fertilizer, mulching, or upgrading the national fleet of lawn mowers.

How to describe this noisome sludge awaiting Obama's signature? John Robb from Global Guerrillas said it best:

<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2012/03/hr-341-neo-feudal-rights-bill-.html>

"HR 347: One more step towards Neo-Feudalism

In feudal times, you could be put to death if you didn't kneel when the carriages of the nobility passed by. This is a step in that direction (although very few people care).

I'm not that excited to write about this type of thing. Seems like more of a chore than something I want to do. Why do I write about it? It's another milestone on the decline of the US that is worth highlighting for future historians.

I can see these future historians now: poring over the output of software systems that cull trends from massive social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) repositories. Some will be

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shaking their heads, asking themselves: what were those numbskulls in the early 21st Century thinking about when their governments began to hollow out? Why were they so passive as things began to fall apart?

This new bill, about to be signed by the President, is called the Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act of 2011. It is not as innocent as its name.

Essentially, it makes it a federal offense to be anywhere near...somebody protected by the secret service. That's from the President to candidates for political office (Romney or Santorum) to senior government officials to foreign dignitaries (G20). In other words, lots and lots of people.

While being sold as a way to close a loophole in the current law regarding White House security, it is actually much more than that. It changed one word that made a world of difference. What's the difference?

To be arrested and imprisoned, all you need to do is be in the same building or area around a person that has secret service protection. You don't even need to know you are breaking the law to be arrested and imprisoned. If you are merely walking in an area "secured" for a person being protected, you can be legally jailed for up to one year. If you are carrying something that can be seen as a weapon (legally or not), that imprisonment can be extended to ten years.

In short, if you are within the same building or neighborhood being secured to protect a political or foreign personage without their expressed permission, you can be imprisoned.

"Trust us" or "they are good people" isn't a valid answer to this critique. If a new power can be abused legally, it will eventually be abused. Very simple tautology."

It's too late to contact your elected representatives to tell them to vote against HR 347. That ship has sailed. I guess you could email Obama and ask him to veto a bill that overwhelmingly passed in both Houses. By the way ... all the "liberal" Congressmen and Senators from my State voted for it. Does my heart good to see how effective it is to "work within the system."

If Obama signs this thing ... what could the future bring?

Protest is ... over. If you don't like what any of the Republicans hoping to be their party's candidate has to say ... keep it to yourself. Whatever you do don't go down to one of their rallies. Instead write a scathing Letter to The Editor or send a harsh email to Romney, Santorum, or Gingrich. If a G-8 or G-20 Summit is held near your town ... stay home and write another email. And if you normally carry a pocketknife ... steer clear of the Federal Building downtown. You never know who might be inside.

Sometimes I get the feeling it would be easier if I just turned myself in and got it over with. I'm bound to do something that'll be against some new law that hasn't passed yet. It's just a matter of time. And then I take a step back and try to look at the big picture.

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The alarm goes off, we get up, and something horrible happens every 11 seconds. A species of life on this planet winks out forever.

And as we trundle down the path to the tar pits, and wait in line to sink beneath the goop ... we've got to endure fascistic vicious beasts that rise up in our way ... and bite and bite and bite.