

Common Sense Could Save Us From Litigious Suffocation **May 14, 2002**

Oprah Winfrey recently gave up her book review segment, which was a long established part of one of the most successful talk shows in history.

I, by no means, am attempting to fill that void or achieve the success that part of her repartee added by making it part of mine. I do, however, find it interesting how some authors are able to make us aware of what are subtle measures that ultimately produce severe consequences.

A friend who obviously recognized it as a book fulfilling the same prophecy brought the latest to my attention. The title is *The Death of Common Sense* by Philip K. Howard. It was a “remarkable *New York Times* best seller bestseller”. In it the author explains how law is suffocating America. The jacket copy goes on to condense the comments:

America is drowning in law; in laws, legality, and bureaucratic process. Abandoning our common sense and individual sense of responsibility, we live in terror of the law, in awe of bureaucratic blundering affects us locally. We all pass a prime example of it every day as we drive past the abandoned gas station on Main Street in Old Forge next to Moose River Cabins. A “Chicken Little mentality” has financially broken a local family and caused even greater loss to the community economically, in prestige and personal pride. If ever a situation demanded common sense for resolution, it does.

The Adirondack Park Agency is another local example of classic government waste, impediment, redundant duplication and empire building. Reviews of projects are mostly minor in nature and similar to what most local governments handle with smaller staffs, budgets, and volunteers. At last count awhile back, the cost of every permit granted was \$10,000.

Based on present trends, I will predict that the state-mandated closure of our late landfill will not meet future standards. Whose fault will that be and whom do you suppose will be responsible for paying for it?

I find the greatest satisfaction I derive from being semi-retired is not having to deal with state agencies. They have a propensity for acting like you are their servant instead of the other way around. The greatest oxymoron ever is, “I am from the government and here to help you”.

Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* is perhaps one of the best-known books that made us aware of a problem causing severe consequences. It gained added prominence because it heightened a cause popular with liberals. Many books with the same importance to the public, such as the *Death of Common Sense*, will not receive the same consideration because they expose problems resulting directly from liberal political actions, actions not likely to be highlighted by present mainstream media outlets in this country.

I noted a local environmental problem that came to my attention in the past 20 years. Gradually, over that interim, I have seen occupancy of 25 bird nest boxes by tree swallows dwindle from full to a low of four last spring. So far this year I have yet to see my first tree swallow and it’s long overdue.

I would be interested in knowing if any readers have become aware of the same circumstances. In the meantime, I will try to fulfill your requests, such as one delivered by a reader Friday night who wanted “more controversy”.