

Nibbled to Death by Ducks

Bestselling author and former Iowa City Councilman Larry Baker is probably the best Facebook friend I have who I'm not sure I've ever actually met. In his January 15 guest opinion, he persuasively argues that it's the potential for revenue that is driving the issue of red-light cameras, and in a free society we all have the right to remain largely unsupervised.

My thoughtful response to his reasoning is: "Pish-Posh, Mr. Poopy-Pants."

To me these are secondary concerns. I'm sure you will be shocked (shocked!) to learn that I feel this issue is all about *me*, and I happen to like the idea of the bad guys always getting caught. If you are one of the bad guys, cry me a river - you deserve to suffer.

Like almost everyone else, I'm not wild about following the rules but I generally follow them anyway. Not running red lights is one of those rules, and if I'm going to stand on my brakes every now and then to avoid doing that, by God so are you.

I see this whole camera issue as an extension of "there's never a cop around when you need one." For example, even if I'm running late, I'll poke along on Interstate 80 at 65 and 70 miles an hour, and every now and then a car blows by doing 85. I'll jam my thumbs into my steering wheel (to fire my imaginary Photon Torpedoes) and wonder which donut shop all the state troopers are in at that exact moment.

Occasionally, a few miles down the road I'll see that same car which has slid into the ditch or was pulled over by one of those same unfairly stereotyped state troopers. Words cannot express the satisfaction I feel when that occurs.

Just imagine my satisfaction if *every* speeder could get nailed. I'll bet we could install sensors in every car in America that would cause us to receive a ticket in the mail every time our car exceeds the speed limit. With such consistent enforcement we could raise the limits to accommodate the zero tolerance.

And why stop there? My other pet peeves include jaywalking, littering, sidewalk-spitting, and skateboarding on the Ped Mall. With enough cameras we could have a ticketing rate approaching 100% for these heinous crimes. The penalties could vary depending on the severity of the offense, ranging from a \$5 fine for jaywalkers to death for litterbugs. There could also be a progressive penalty system for repeat offenders (although I'm not sure what more we could do to the litterbugs – take their first-born?).

Back to the red-light cameras – why should we endure the random and arbitrary methods that currently exist to enforce these laws that benefit us all? I'm guessing that upwards of 95% of the speeders and red-light runners in this country aren't getting caught, and that just encourages the reckless and thoughtless to play the odds.

So who makes all these rules that I want to be so strictly enforced? Our elected officials, of course. We're the ones who entrust them to pass the laws and ordinances that further erode our civil liberties as we mindlessly slide down the slippery slope toward a commie totalitarian police-state society.

Not to worry, though. We ultimately retain control over this process because we could always vote out the bums who make the rules that we think have slipped a little too far down that slope. We could, that is, if it weren't for the slanted liberal media, corrupt political election process and apathetic, underinformed voters who make this possible outcome a pleasant and pathetic fantasy.

If it all gets out of hand each of us may eventually have to move to Canada, not that it doesn't have a few notable problems of its own. And not to mention it's full of Canadians.

But I'm not emigrating just yet - this incremental loss of privacy is OK with me. It's possible that I'm being nibbled to death by ducks, but so far it only kind of tickles.

Writer's Group member Dave Parsons never breaks any laws (as far as you know) and co-owns a business on the Coralville strip.