

It don't mean a thing if it ain't got no sting

by Daniel Bech

Daniel Bech asks why our national and local governments make rules that they are not prepared to enforce

When it comes to laws, regulations and enforcement I would always start with a reference to Mel Brooks' *History of the World - Part 1*. Brooks appears as Moses, descending from Mount Sinai with three heavy stone tablets bearing the fifteen Commandments; after he drops one of them, the laws of God become the Ten Commandments!

Just think of the stress stone masons would be under today if all the byelaws, regulations and guidelines needed to keep us citizens under control had to be chiselled onto stone.

But there is a further dilemma. The more people ignore the regulations, the less likely officials are to prosecute.

Of course that doesn't apply when moneys are involved, as with TV licences, Council taxes, Business rates and Penalty Charge Notices. People are taken to Court, fines are imposed or else they are sent to jail.

Parking was decriminalised to subsidise Boroughs and create new jobs. If you are poor you could find yourself in the hands of the TV licence people; if you are rich, a ticket of £60 (reduced to £30 if you pay within two weeks) is not a deterrent; it's more

like a tip to a barmaid.

Parking on pavements is unlawful, yet on Pembury Road loaded lorries ruin heritage brick pavements and are a nuisance and hazard to pedestrians. Is there nobody in charge to stop this?

Staying with transport - take the bus 'gateways' on Mount Pleasant Road outside the Opera House. In total 7 signs blight the street scene. Daily about 800 drivers slip illegally through this stretch. No enforcement in sight!

Recently an Estate Agent confronted York Road residents by putting 8 cars on a small piece of land 15ft x 50ft. All rules, set by Local Planning, taxation and Highways Code are broken. There has been no sign yet that the authorities will intervene!

Has anyone ever been fined in Tunbridge Wells for emptying his dog on a pavement? On many lampposts signs indicate that TWBC is fining the owners for this offense. Judged by the mess you can see everywhere in town, no-one takes notice - it is not enforced!

There are fines for litter louts, too, but wherever you go the person in front has just dropped the wrapping of a Mars bar. Threats alone do not help!

Recently an Alcohol Control Zone

was made law in Tunbridge Wells. We see the signs everywhere, tastefully painted in heritage colours. So how come every weekend residents are woken by drunken revellers? Greg Clark told us that he had been out with a Police patrol and was shocked



The Mount Pleasant Bus 'gateway' is just not being policed

that many of the lads were illiterate. So maybe the group targeted by the signs cannot read them or is too drunk to take notice. This begs the question: Does every rule have to be put onto a sign? Or is this just a subsidy for sign-makers?

If you drive along Forest Road you will notice the forest of signs warning you, on the left, in the middle and on the right that you should drive at 30 miles per hour. If the occasional cautious driver does this, he brings the flow to a standstill.

We have been told that soon a third of all street clutter will be removed. As there are no SPOs (Sign Preservation Orders), like TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders, another point of enforcement neglect) there is a chance that our town might soon look better.

TWBC's Planning Department

issues hundreds of enforceable conditions per year in conjunction with planning applications. Yet not all of them are adhered to. Who follows up? Why set conditions, which are not enforced? Maybe it makes some developments look less evil. Even then, developers can ask for the ease or alteration of a condition later.

Judging by examples of local town planning, developers have an easy life in Tunbridge Wells. 'Grot Spots' have been a standing agenda item for the Civic Society for the last year, yet the Cinema site seems to be untouchable, despite it ruining the setting of the Town Hall itself.

Why do our 'authorities' invent regulations that they have neither the resources nor the will to enforce? Do they secretly hope that the God of Moses will take a hand? □ DB