

## **It's Not About the Lawn— It's About Keeping the Rabble in Line**

Once America was known as the land of the free. Now it resembles a police state more each year. The recent Orem "lawn lady" affair is a case in point.

Police officer Jim Flygare came to Betty Perry's door in July to cite her for not watering her lawn. He asked for her name, and the 70-year-old woman refused to tell him, as is her natural right. Then she tried to go back into her home to call her son for advice on how to handle the situation.

That's when the \*\*\*\* hit the fan. Within moments Mrs. Perry was bruised, bleeding, and handcuffed, and soon the bewildered woman was sitting in a jail cell.

As Mrs. Perry later said, "Don't ever say no when the police tell you to do something... You've got to do what they tell you or they will hurt you." Mrs. Perry made the mistake of acting like a free woman. She didn't realize that the code of today's policeman is not *to serve and protect*; it is *to command and control*.

In yesterday's America, Officer Flygare would simply have gotten Mrs. Perry's name from the land records and mailed her a citation. There was no need to arrest her, as she was no danger to anyone. Even Orem Police Chief Mike Larsen concurs: "Clearly there were other options available. [The officer] should have taken those."

And yet Orem City prosecutor Andrew Peterson insisted on prosecuting Mrs. Perry for interfering with an arrest, punishable by up to 6 months in jail and a fine of \$1000. Peterson made it clear that her failure to obey was the main issue: "By far the more serious charge that she's facing is interference with arrest..." But heaven forbid the jury should find out that the arrest was both unnecessary and unreasonable. Peterson objected to proposed jury instructions that would include information about use-of-force protocols at the Orem Police Department and what kinds of options police officers have in certain situations.

In the end Mrs. Perry and the prosecutor reached a deal in which she plead guilty to disorderly conduct, punishable by a \$100 fine, and agreed not to file suit against the city. Peterson's comments were revealing: "We got what we wanted, which was a conviction that described her disrespectful and dangerous behavior with the officer." Disrespect towards police officers *is* dangerous to a police state; it threatens to upset the atmosphere of fear and habit of meek obedience needed to maintain control over the populace.

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