

Real World Graduation: Question 18

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Question 18

Consider the following fictional scenario. A certain city of 250,000 people was consistently overrun with rats. It was estimated that there were about 20 times as many rats in the city as there were people. The rats continued to be a health nuisance, and many children had to be treated in local hospitals due to rat bites and the diseases they carry. Over the past ten years, the citizens had voted for, and paid, special taxes to be allocated to fighting the rat problem, totaling \$150,000,000. (This works out to about \$60 per year for ten years for each city resident.) The city sanitation department was in charge of suppressing the rats, and sometimes made some progress. They routinely proclaimed great successes, but over the long run, the reality was that the rat population continued to grow, outpacing the growth of the human population.

A certain wealthy man decided to take some action. He convinced a local radio station to announce a "bounty" on rats, amounting to \$2.00 per pound for any rats, dead or alive, payable in cash to any resident of the city who showed up at the city dump with the rats on a certain day. This was widely advertised over a two-week period; on the chosen day, many city residents arrived at the city dump with about five million dead rats. This is far greater than the total number of rats killed by the city forces in the past ten years.

The average weight of the rats was about 1.5 pounds each; this initiative cost the wealthy man about \$15,000,000 all total. The wealthy man paid the bounty in cash as promised. The total expense was about one-tenth of the total cost of the special taxes paid by the residents over the past ten years.

Then, to embarrass the city, the wealthy man arranged for all the dead rats to be dumped on the sidewalks in front of City Hall late on a Sunday night. When the City Hall workers come to work the next morning, they could not get into the building because of all the dead rats blocking the entrances. Naturally, the Mayor and City Council members were furious, and called a press conference to denounce the private rat killing effort. The mayor demanded that the wealthy patron have the rats removed, which was refused. The city ended up removing the rats and burned them in a neighboring incinerator. What is likely to happen next?

- a) An investigation will be conducted into how the tax money appropriated for the unsuccessful city-run rat suppression initiative was spent to see if there was any waste, fraud, or abuse of the taxpayer's money.
- b) The head of the sanitation department will resign for his failure to get the rat population under control, even though the taxpayers had paid \$150,000,000 in taxes for that purpose over the previous ten years.
- c) The Mayor will resign in disgrace for letting the rat situation get out of control.
- d) The Mayor will remain in office, but will announce that he will not run for re-election.
- e) Both a) and b) plus either c) or d).

Answer to Question 18

This is a trick question. None of the answers are correct.

Here is what is likely to happen:

- a) The Mayor and City Council will call a joint press conference and denounce the rat kill-off as a dangerous action that put the health of the citizens at risk. Note: City Hall will be in the position of claiming that there was no health hazard when the rats were alive, biting small children. They will appear to claim that the rats became a health issue only after death, when they were put on the sidewalk used by City Hall employees. This attitude indicates a massive degree of arrogance and hypocrisy, neither which are problems for a typical City Hall. The Mayor and Council members will also decline to answer why they didn't stop the private rat-killing initiative beforehand if they thought it was so dangerous.
- b) The City will ask the local police and the FBI to conduct a full investigation into the motives, finances, and personal relationships of the wealthy patron, the employees of the radio station, and the trucking company hired to deposit the dead rats in front of City Hall. All are subsequently demonized in the local media for being "cowardly, extremist anti-government types with possible ties to terrorism" and "infiltrators seeking to lower the public's opinion of the government".
- c) The wealthy patron will be sued for the cost of the rat removal, and will subsequently be prosecuted for conducting a sanitation operation without a license.
- d) The wealthy patron will be sued by the government employees union for attempting to eliminate government jobs.
- e) The wealthy patron will be sued by an animal rights group for genocide.
- f) The head of the sanitation department will receive a raise and promotion to Special Advisor to the Mayor.
- g) The Mayor will take credit for ridding the city of rats, and will run for Governor.

The important point to remember is that corrupt, incompetent, and inefficient governments will do what is necessary to protect themselves and their friends from embarrassment. If your local government is corrupt, incompetent, and inefficient, never participate in any attempt to do anything useful, unless you can keep it secret before and after. There's no future in it.