

WALTER WILLIAMS

Growing contempt for government

OCTOBER 19 — Rush Limbaugh has over 5 million listeners per day. G. Gordon Liddy might have a couple of million. Baltimore's Alan Keyes, a radio talk show newcomer, has recently become syndicated. Then there's Los Angeles' Errol Smith and Larry Elder, Denver's Ken Hamblin, and Washington's Armstrong Williams. Limbaugh and Liddy are white guys, and Keyes, Smith, Elder, Hamblin and Williams are black guys. What they and a growing number of popular conservative talk shows have in common is they've become forums for millions of Americans fed up with government and politicians.

CALLERS ARE ORDINARY Americans trying to earn a living, pay their bills and raise their families. Many are just about ready to reject the legitimacy of federal government. They're paying more in federal taxes than food, shelter and clothing combined and increasingly see themselves victimized by government. Their grievance list includes: men victimized by sex quotas, whites victimized by race quotas, blacks victimized by fraudulent schools and rampant crime, small businessmen victimized by regulations, devoutly religious people compelled to pay for abortions and pornography, gun owners who see politicians taking them on and turning criminals loose, and smokers who are made to feel like social outcasts.

For the most part, talk radio audiences are the people who make this country work, who are being forcibly used to serve the purposes of the taxeaters. Politicians and bureaucrats, being taxeaters, along with their sycophants in the news media, have contempt for both the hosts and their audiences.

Ordinary law-abiding Americans have become targets for vicious government harassment that ranges from having to comply with stupid and costly environmental and endangered species regulations to what is no less than government-sponsored massacre in Waco, Texas. While decent Americans have become government targets, criminals and bums, deviants of every stripe have become society's mascots to be coddled with sensitivity, their "rights" worshipped, and paraded before us as moral equivalents on *Oprah* and *Donahue*.

DECENT PEOPLE ARE tired of being criminalized. That's precisely what Congress does every day — criminalize Americans by turning previously peaceable voluntary transactions into criminal acts. If Congress and Clinton have their way in socializing our health care system, they will add to that health criminals. What is not a criminal act now, choosing your doctor and paying him out of your pocket, will become criminal.

The most important contribution of talk radio is that it has reduced feelings

of isolation. Americans who have been victimized by one government policy or another have felt alone and guilty. If they are against race and sex quotas, intellectual elites, politicians and the news media made them feel like they're racists and sexists. If they smoke, they are made to feel like the personification of evil. If they are against unconstitutional gun control, they're made to feel guilty for America's crime. But talk radio lets people know they are not by themselves; they're in the company of millions.

LARGE NUMBERS OF Americans are just about ready to declare themselves innocent. They are coming to realize that it's an illegitimate Congress and many laws it writes are unjust. Like our founders, they're beginning to conclude there's no moral duty to obey unjust laws. They see government, especially Washington, as the enemy. If Congress continues to underestimate the level of deep-seated anger across the land and presses on with its agenda to control, things are going to heat up. The fact that today's Americans have unprecedented moral contempt for both the incumbent president and Congress won't make it any better.

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