

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



## Scavenging Is Not A Crime

The Leveller

You've seen them. Poor people going through trash dumpsters looking for aluminum cans; homeless people pushing shopping carts full of recyclables, people going through dumpsters at construction sites looking for recyclables that a wasteful builder was planning to send to a nearby landfill. Now we hear the propaganda lie of the government: "Scavengers are a nuisance!" "Scavengers are bad for the community." "Scavengers are greedy opportunists."

What's really going on? First of all, the government has figured out that it can get a lot of free money off you by selling your trash to recycling companies. Because it collects so much trash, it can separate recyclables a lot more cheaply than we can (in fact, if we are **required** to separate our trash, we do all the work for free). It also saves money by not paying as much to landfill the trash because trash trucks pay a "tipping fee" to dump the trash in the landfill which is based on the weight of the trash. By law, your trash stops being your property when you take it to the curb (or dump it in a dumpster as the case may be). The police have used this as a justification to search your trash without a warrant and it held up in court. The government is trying to claim the trash but, it only

The Leveller  
Scavenging Is Not A Crime

Retrieved on January 1, 2005 from [www.cat.org.au](http://www.cat.org.au)

[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)

owns the trash container. The truth is that it is the government that is greedy. It is the government which is the opportunist.

Another thing going on is that rich people want to keep poor people out of their neighborhood. Seeing poor people working their ass off sorting trash for nickels while they live in luxury gives them a guilt trip. Like attacks on homeless people, laws against scavenging are designed to **hide poverty** so the rich can go about their business pretending the System works and poor people are just lazy (They actually believe that bullshit). They don't have to stop and think how a person can pay rent and feed a family on the Minimum Wage.

The reality is that a lot of people can't get jobs, can't earn enough to support themselves off the Minimum Wage, or have been forced into homelessness by personal problems beyond their control like layoffs at work, a divorce or separation (or a spouse/partner just checked out and left them), or creditors playing games with their debts. Maybe their spouse/partner was a dooper who was dragging them down, got fined, or got put in jail. Maybe their spouse/partner started beating on them or abusing their kids. Now days, getting a job can be tough. The government wants to force poor people into work they can't live off of to get so-called "welfare benefits" that the government keeps cutting.

Persecuting scavengers is just another act of government hypocrisy and greed. They keep preaching to people to get off of the Dole and be self-reliant but, turn around and want to fine or arrest people who are doing just that. Most scavengers would rather have a regular job. They are just trying to survive. The government should get off their backs!