

Non-POM and White Collar Crime

Some of the most well-respected members of the community are criminals. No, I'm not referring to sex crimes between consenting adults or use of recreational drugs. I'm not even referring to fireworks or fishing out of season. I am referring to crimes that are worth many billions of dollars in the U.S. economy and which cost thousands of innocent lives each year.

These are the so-called "white collar" crimes. These are the crimes of business, finance, and retailing. These are crimes of the middle and upper classes. These are the crimes for which the criminals rarely are accused, rarely brought to trial, and almost never sent to prison. Yet these crimes cost the average citizen thousands of dollars each year.

Occasionally some white collar crime will make it to the headlines. The dollar amounts are usually in the millions in those cases. Sometimes, as in the case of the defective tires several years ago, lives are reported as being lost. Sometimes the failure of a bridge, building, or highway makes headlines with or without injury or loss of life. Sometimes, a celebrity is involved or a big name political figure and then the headlines appear because of who is involved. But generally, the crimes go unreported, unnoticed, unremarked, and certainly not investigated.

These crimes are often committed by businesses as means of selling merchandise or getting people to sign contracts by misrepresentation (lying) or in providing a product that does not meet specifications. The employees of a company may be required, *as a condition of keeping their job*, to participate in these crimes. In this way, millions of people become accomplices to crimes.

But all the above is how things are now in a POM (physical object money) economy. How would a non-POM or post-POM type of society fare with regard to white collar crime? The answer is that it would do quite well. (You weren't expecting me to say it would fail, were you?) Almost all these crimes are committed *for money*. That is, they are committed in order to get money. These actions would not gain anyone money in a post-POM economy. Many of the industries which participate in white collar crime do not even *exist* in a post-POM economy. There are no banks or insurance companies or stock markets or government regulation of business. There are no lawsuits. This eliminates the opportunity for a very wide range of white collar crimes.

When we move to the area of retail, a similar situation is found. Those who sell items are not paid by the consumer but by a third party. That third party is an expert (relative to the consumer) in the product. That third party

is much more difficult to fool. Also, the pay is made only after the product has been consumed at least to some degree and it continues so long as the product is generating benefits. Therefore, the motivation of the retailer is to provide the best product which is as exactly suited to the customer's needs as possible in order to maximize their own pay. The owner of the retail establishment does not pay the clerks so the clerks are there to serve the customer, not to keep the owner happy. Of course, by maximizing their own personal pay they also will maximize the owner's pay so the owner will want them to do what's best for the customer.

Reputation is also very important in post-POM business in part because the customers can easily discover the reputation of those with whom they are dealing. The coming information society, the society in which all one's actions are monitored by the computer system regardless of whether the economy is a POM or non-POM economy, will make it very difficult to cheat without being found out and without having everyone that one later deals with knowing *how* one cheated. One simply will not have to blindly trust those one works with or one buys from. This removes most of the temptation to even try to cheat.

The conclusion is that in a non-POM society since there will be few opportunities to gain money by unethical conduct, there will be few temptations to be unethical, and the enforcement of law and convention will be swift and effective. Therefore, white collar crime will almost completely disappear in post-POM society.