

---

# Fight Against The Windmills

Hayots Ashkhar Daily - 11/6/2008

---

Judging by the statements of the senior officials and the hurry-scurry observed in different state agencies, we have started the successive stage of the fight against corruption.

Exactly 20 years ago, in the spring of 1988, we, the then citizens of the Soviet Union, heard for the first time the USSR Supreme Council make a statement on the necessity of eradicating corruption. Thereafter, the authorities of independent Armenia gave similar promises many a time, of course being more cautious in their formulations.

The time passed, the efforts multiplied while corruption in the country prospered more and more. Apparently, those leading a struggle against corruption did really predict such a result; therefore they persuaded themselves as well as society that corruption was widespread all over the world, and eradicating the phenomenon was impossible.

The revelation was quite substantiated and even useful to everybody. On the one hand, it justified the permanent existence of dishonest officials in the state government system, on the other hand, created an illusion that their number had decreased, at least by couple of people.

Why don't we ever make a significant progress in the fight against corruption? There is probably one reason for that: the social "weed" is being rooted out in one field whereas it grows in a completely different one. Don't be lazy; just look through the dictionary of foreign words and see how corruption is defined there. And you will see that it is the "dishonest or illegal behavior of public and political figures".

Yes, figures!

Therefore, whenever we are informed about the arrest of a minor or average dishonest official, it is not corruption yet. It is bribery, embezzlement of the state property, but not corruption. That dragon does not live at the foot of the mountain called "Authority"; it flies over its top.

>From time to time we hear some people announce that it is necessary take some measures against corruption, and the officials get into a panic. No, they are not afraid of anything; they begin to take certain steps. All kinds of councils and commissions "combating" corruption begin to multiply as did the collective farms in the period of mass collectivization. Then, all this dies away in a natural manner till the next time.

They say corruption is a multi-facial phenomenon, and it is extremely difficult to combat it. I believe, combating street roguery is, nonetheless, more difficult. It has so many faces and images that even an experienced person may become stupefied. While in case of corruption everything is plain, just on the surface. Let's take, for example, the private business of the representatives of the authorities. What's the secret here? How many similar facts do there exist in our reality at present? It is even impossible to count them; they bear a universal nature.

And how many times have we raised the issue of controlling the income of the officials? Yes, the issue was raised in the Soviet times as well, but conversations on that subject did really make some sense in that period. A

Soviet Minister could not buy a summer cottage, a car and furniture within a year. Except his salaries and bonuses he was not entitled to anything else.

As a matter of fact, he certainly had more than that, but he was afraid of showing it off.

As to the present-day officials, they probably do not even remember how much their salary is. They do not burden their memories with such kind of trivial matters. Neither are they afraid of anything.

Whereas, it is necessary to bear in mind that corruption produces a murderous effect. It produces a murderous effect in the strictest sense of the word. If we look upon the data and try to find out, for instance, what corruption is in the sphere of medicine, we'll see that someone who is entitled to benefit from free medical services is actually deprived of that right, and this brings about lethal consequences.

Corruption in the sphere of education means that you may take your child to a doctor tomorrow, and that doctor may "buy" the examination grades.

And what is corruption in the law enforcement agencies? It means that by giving bribe, an intoxicated driver says good-bye to the car-inspector and runs somebody down on the way, bringing about his death. As you saw, we brought the simplest examples.

There is a widespread delusion that if business is engaged in bribery, this has nothing to do with all of us. That's absolutely wrong. Because business is not a charity organization, and the whole value of business corruption eventually determines the value of the products. And business corruption is as murderous as corruption in the field of law enforcement, medicine, education etc. Because the goods and services become expensive, providing less access to the more disadvantaged groups.

That the authorities currently declare of their intention to fight corruption is not bad. But if they do not start the fight with serious changes in the state government system, the long-awaited miracle will never come true. Because, as one of the wise men noted in his time, it is impossible to weed out cannibalism in the atmosphere of cannibals.

---