

# Broken windows

By Theodore Dalrymple

**Sadiq Khan must have done very well out of his position** (or entered it a very rich man), for – according to posters that I noticed at several Underground stations recently – “Services funded by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, have supported over 19,800 people off the streets since 2016.”

Gosh! What generosity and largesse! I presume that “to support people off the streets” means to give the homeless somewhere to live, by no means a cheap thing to do. Most people in London have difficulty housing even themselves.



The poster is straightforward political propaganda, not to mention its aspect of personal grandiosity—of a personality cult without a personality, aimed at re-election.

It is thus an example of the corrupted use of public funds, but we hardly notice it because such use is what we have come to expect of what used to be called public servants but ought now to be called masters of the public.

Of course, this is a minor instance of abuse of office, not to be compared with other recent examples of alleged misconduct

in public office that I could mention, but on the theory of broken windows – that if small instances of disorder are neglected, greater ones will soon be committed – we should not disregard this small misuse of money.

It is upsetting to see people living on the streets (it induces a vague feeling of guilt amongst the prosperous, even though they have done nothing wrong) but one cannot help but wonder how and why they got there.

One finds oneself veering between considerations of public policy – for example, of the encouragement of population growth without concomitant increase of the housing stock or the closure of psychiatric hospitals – and those of personal responsibility for such phenomena as alcoholism and drug addiction.

For reasons of personal aversion, I prefer to blame the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, for homelessness in the capital. Whether he is to blame is beside the point.

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