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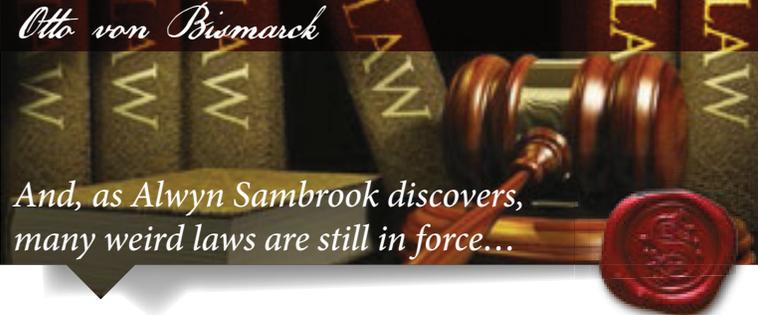


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*"Laws are like sausages:  
it's best not to see how they're made"*

*Otto von Bismarck*



*And, as Alwyn Sambrook discovers, many weird laws are still in force...*

Given the ingenuity of legislators, it's no surprise to find laws covering every aspect of our lives.

In many cases they're designed to preserve safety or integrity. Which is why, for instance, traffic police in South Korea must declare any bribes received from motorists; or why it's unlawful in Ghana to sell second-hand underpants. And how reassuring to know that Turkish men aged over 80 are barred from becoming airline pilots, or that in New Zealand you have only three months to report – in writing – any uranium you discover.

But sometimes our law-makers seem just too restrictive. Why is it a legal requirement for motor vehicle inspectors in parts of India to have perfect teeth? Why can Somalis no longer walk around with used blobs of chewing gum stuck on their noses? And what harm might befall Danish gourmets caught consuming raw bacon during the full moon?

The intention, if we apply pure logic, appears to be one of 'just in case' – but, then, if you're going to create new laws, they should at least be consistent. In Indonesia, for example, drink-driving is not considered illegal. Commit the same offence in San Salvador and you could (genuinely) face the firing squad.

And what about those regulations wholly unlikely to be enforced? Like in Mexico, where it's unlawful to repeat the all-American exhortation 'Have a nice day'. Or in Buenos Aires, where feather beds are prohibited because 'they provoke lewdness'. Or, even better, in China, where Tibetan monks are forbidden to reincarnate without government permission.

Final unworkability honours, though, could conceivably go to Brighton, where an obscure law still proscribes having sex under the pier whilst morris dancing. Get accused of this and you might just offer a prime defence in court: 'pull the other one, it's got bells on...'