

Pigeons Have Copied Your Brain

by Con Chapman

In a summer of my misspent youth long past I worked as an intern in Washington, D.C. and would frequently walk past the White House on my lunch hour. There I would encounter, as you may today, protestors of various persuasions, all of whom blamed a predictable cast of characters—the President, the CIA, the FBI—for the ills of the world.

Anti-pigeon demonstrators.

After a while, it became part of the summer atmosphere of the District, like the humidity, the hordes of other interns and the Japanese tourists. But then on one such noontime excursion, out of the blur of figures that had become as familiar as a wallpaper pattern, a lone man with a display of instant photographs caught my eye. “PIGEONS HAVE COPIED OUR BRAINS!” the legend above his pictures read, and I stopped. To say that my life changed with that chance encounter would be an overstatement, but I remember him to this day.



Pigeons: They're smarter than you think.

I worked for the government, so I had plenty of time to examine his pictures and listen to his tale. It turned out that pigeons had

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been reproducing human brain waves for years—right under our noses—using nothing more sophisticated than ordinary office photocopiers. And nobody was doing anything about it!



. . . and you thought I was kidding!

I heard the man out, examined his photos, most of which depicted apparently addle-brained humans—the finished product, as it were—and never saw him again.



Pro se litigant.

I returned to Boston and a year later found myself the most junior legal beagle in the litigation department of a large law firm, spending hours stuck in the library doing research. The closest I came to a real-life lawsuit was when one of our clients was named as a defendant in a nuisance complaint by a crank. It became my job to draft papers to get our client dismissed from the case, but before doing so, it was suggested that I call the fellow up and ask him politely if he would consider dropping Acme Amalgamated Fasteners, or whomever, from the suit voluntarily so as to avoid unnecessary expense.

"I can't," came the reply. "The voices—they won't stop—they won't let me alone."

"Who's tormenting you?" I asked politely.

"The CIA, the FBI, the Pope, the . . . "

"Aren't you forgetting somebody?" I asked brusquely, interrupting. Sometimes a forceful intervention can bring a madman back to reality. "Like—pigeons?"

"Pigeons?"

"Yes. I went to the White House and found out it's actually the pigeons who are controlling our brain waves."

"Really?" the plaintiff asked.

"Sure—you don't buy that crap about the CIA and the Pope, do you? That's exactly what they *want* you to believe!"



When pigeons attack!

"You know, I never have liked pigeons. You may be onto something."

"Sure I'm onto something. I got it from the pigeons themselves!"

"Gee—I never knew . . ."

"That's okay. Hey, at least I got to you before it was too late. Now about Acme Amalgamated Fasteners . . ."

I didn't persuade the man to drop the suit, but the dialogue came back to me today as I walked down the alley between two buildings in Boston and—once again—heard the same tired complaint. A disheveled man, talking to himself, apparently incoherent, shaking his head, yelled out "It's the CIA!"

Please—can we finally bury this base canard in the graveyard of lunatic ideas where it belongs? As between the CIA, the FBI, Pope Francis I and pigeons, which is more likely to control your brain? I submit the following to you:

1. If the CIA really controlled your brain, you'd be thinking about dossiers. You don't even know what a dossier is.

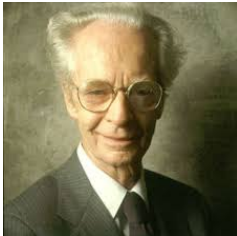
2. The CIA has centralized headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Pigeons operate independently, sort of like franchisees, from a number of convenient locations across the country to better monitor your brain waves.



"Thanks—I got it on sale."

3. The Pope is too busy shopping for clothes to control your brain.

4. In 1950, King George VI made FBI director J. Edgar Hoover an honorary knight in the Order of the British Empire. They don't give those things out for trivial stuff like controlling your brain waves.



B.F. Skinner: "A pigeon flew into my head."

5. Finally, and most importantly, noted behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner taught pigeons how to play ping-pong, a game that humans master without the assistance of a geeky-looking Harvard professor. *If pigeons have so much free time they can play ping-pong, they have time for really important stuff like controlling your brain!*

So there you have it. Don't say I didn't warn you. And if you see a pigeon as you walk through the park today, do yourself a favor.

Throw him some popcorn, or maybe a piece of your hot dog roll. You never know what he might do with the stuff he's got on you.

