

Lawyer-Bashing in the Western Tradition: 350 BC to 1992 AD

By Robert Gaudet, Jr.

Heard any good lawyer jokes, lately? If so, you're not alone. Contemporary Americans hear law-related humor frequently, but usually don't realize that such jokes are exceedingly unoriginal. Complaints about too many lawyers did not begin with Vice-President Dan Quayle's 1991 remarks to the American Bar Association, nor did legal satire originate on MTV Comedy Hour. Legal criticisms thread through Western tradition. Many criticisms against lawyers are justified or explicable because of high costs, lengthy procedures, immoral behavior, greedy motivations, and legal monopolization. At the same time, lawyers provide necessary services and leadership to American society.

Many reforms under consideration could reshape the Bar's image, but never completely. Lawyers are not societal aberrations. They simply reflect the culture which both forms and ridicules them. Centuries before Christ was born, ancient Greek literature satirized lawyers and their New Logic. The Bible portrays Christ's antagonists as conspiring lawyers, or Pharisees, who try to extract self-incriminating statements from Him. At the height of the Roman Empire, the legal profession thrived. As Rome waned, the profession crumbled with it. Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (400AD) decries legal contentiousness and rhetoric. Legal satire frequents Medieval and Renaissance Literature. In the late sixteenth century, Montaigne and Shakespeare criticized lawyers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Goethe take parting shots in their prominent **eighteenth century works**, *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* and *Faust*, respectively.

Historical Satire

Aristophanes' *The Clouds* follows an Athenian tradition *oikomos*—an abusive and invective style of comedy. *The Clouds* depicts Socrates as a rhetorical Sophist who is paid to teach his students the art of contentious argument based on ridiculous logic. Although Aristophanes misrepresents Socrates, his description of Sophists is clear. According to one character, the Athenian Sophists "offer a course called *The Technique of Winning Lawsuits. Honest or dishonest, it's all one.*" (Penguin 29) According to the translator, William Arrowsmith, "The technique of winning lawsuits" literally translates from the Greek as the ability to "overcome the truth by telling lies." (Penguin 152) Lawyers, therefore, tell lies. According to Aristophanes, deception is inherent in the legal profession, especially since rhetoric and lying are an essential part of any lawyer's education. *The Clouds* contrasts the rational power of piety (Philosophy or Old Logic) against the rational power of prose and formal logic (Sophistry). When Sophistry

asks, "What sort of men are lawyers?" Philosophy responds, "Why, they're all Buggers." (Penguin 107) With the tools of rhetoric, lawyers "make a mockery of all morality, systematically confounding good with evil and evil with good." (Penguin 101) Like some modern lawyers, Athenian Sophists were frequently motivated by wealth in a profession that "proved to be an extremely lucrative source of income." (Penguin 103) For all their criticisms, the Athenian perceptions of lawyers hold to a double-standard. Athenians mock Sophists but demand their services. The satiric stand-off in *The Clouds* takes place in a court-room setting, demonstrating the implicit acceptance of litigiousness. Both democracies, ancient Athens and the contemporary United States, are litigious and overpopulated with lawyers.

The Bible portrays lawyers as argumentative and worldly. Like the Sophists, Pharisees are synonymous with lawyers and receive monetary compensation for teaching the law. Just as the Sophists antagonized ancient Greek philosophers, the Pharisees hinder Christ: "when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him." (Matthew 27:34) In the Gospel according to Luke, "a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test" (Luke 7:30) Christ speaks of divine commandments, but the Pharisees are preoccupied with worldly laws. Each lawyer forces Christ to prove himself. Jesus Christ derides the legal profession in undeniable terms:

Woe to you lawyers also! for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers... Woe to you lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering. (Luke 11:45-52)

By obstructing Christ's attempts to teach the divine truth, lawyers block the gates of Heaven. By creating contention, they remove the key of knowledge or *caratas*, which initiates universal brotherhood. Their analytical minds resist spiritual understanding. Like the laws that they argue, lawyers are bound to the world. They are also blamed for humanity's imperfectability:

Always at the center of worldly disputes, usually at the very hub of power, judges and advocates are the sitting ducks of social satire, a fate which they have never relinquished throughout the history of Western civilization. (Tucker 2)

Pilate, too, was at the "very hub of power" and judged against Christ. The worldly and spiritual spheres are typified by the Pharisees and Christ.

Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (400 AD) describe his experiences with a "worldly career" in law, making the same distinction as Christ between worldly and divine laws. (Penguin 123) Though he once studied the law, Augustine claims his intentions were misguided: "Those studies of mine... were designed to fit me for the law so that I might gain a great

Helvidius

name in a profession where those who deceive most people have the biggest reputations. Such is the blindness of men, that blindness should become an actual source of pride!" (Penguin 55) Like Greek Sophists, lawyers of Augustine's time were thought to "make the worse into the stronger argument," as Socrates remarked in *The Apology*. (Hackett 23) Si Augustine, like Aristophanes and Plato, refers to rhetoric as "the arts of deception, to be used not against the life of any innocent man, though sometimes to save the life of the guilty." (Penguin 70) Augustine's perceptions span Western history, because they are markedly similar to the opinions of previous, and later, writers on lawyers. Modern-day American perceptions also criticize attorneys' ability to set the guilty free.

Medieval and Renaissance satires of lawyers are found in *The Canterbury Tales*, *Piers Plowman*, and *London Lickpenny*. After the Medieval Period, the economic roots of feudalism weakened and the middle class grew. According to some, "the legal profession. . . introduced the most dramatic social changes and. . . fostered the growth of mercantile enterprise." (Tucker 11) As targets of satire, lawyers were a symbol of the transition from traditional feudal rights to the centralized early modern urban state. Lawyers were often accused of indulging in sin. Some followed Biblical precedent and criticized lawyers for their worldly studies. If they were reading law, some Medieval thinkers reasoned, lawyers could

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not also be studying the Bible. In addition, legal studies encouraged "contention, avarice and duplicity." (Tucker 19) Some late Medieval criticisms sound familiar to contemporary Americans, including "pandering to the rich, ignoring the *querelae* of the poor, prolonging or delaying litigation, padding fees, and engaging in a greedy scramble for lands." (Tucker 10) Many Medieval writers felt there were simply too many lawyers!

"Pettifoggery," a term coined in the sixteenth century, refers to the unscrupulous practice of law. Pettifoggers were poorly-educated "lawyers of inferior status" who practiced petty litigation. (Tucker 31) They overcharged clients, fomented disputes for personal gain, claimed fees from both parties in a lawsuit, and helped themselves at all costs. Curiously enough, the pettifogger closely matches our stereotypical greedy corporate lawyer. Literature often referred to the pettifogger as a "devil or diabolically inspired, as an ignoramus, or as lust-driven." (Tucker 31) Although many satirists thought that lawyers caused the increases in litigation, other accounts show that "the courts would have had far less business without the litigiousness of greedy *citizens*." [emphasis added] (Tucker 34) Medieval and Renaissance satires demonstrate the longevity of stereotypical representations, but also show that lawyers may simply represent pre-existing social contention.

Montaigne and Shakespeare, writing in the late sixteenth century, capture vicious contemporary attitudes

toward lawyers. The most popular lawyer-bashing exclamation comes from *Henry VI*, wherein the butcher cries "[t]he first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (IV, ii, 2) In *King Lear*, the Earl of Kent says, "This is nothing, fool," and the Fool responds, "[t]hen 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer - you gave me nothing for't" (I, ii) The Fool observes that lawyers do nothing without payment. Shakespeare succumbs to the stereotype of a rapacious, money-motivated lawyer that we first noted in *The Clouds*. Montaigne, a contemporary of Shakespeare, includes a telling footnote in his essay *On Experience* (1580):

When King Ferdinand sent out colonists to the Indies, he wisely provided that they should take no legal scholars with them, for fear that litigation might breed in that new world, jurisprudence being by nature a science productive of altercation and division. He agreed with Plato that lawyers and doctors are bad provision for any country. (Penguin 345)

Do lawyers create dissension? Montaigne thinks so. Athenian and Medieval satirists also blamed the attorneys for excessive litigation.

Eighteenth century literature reflects similar perceptions of lawyers. Although Goethe once studied law at the University of Strasbourg, he presents the lawyer-devil stereotype in *Faust*. Mephistopheles tells a student that, concerning law: "I'm *well acquainted* with that discipline, whose laws and statutes are transmitted like a never ending pestilence." [emphasis added] (Bantam 121) Mephistopheles, who takes pleasure in worldly entertainment, claims the law as his own, just as Christ rejected worldly law in favor of divine commandment. Faust seeks an escape from the legal and scholarly *melancholia* which besets others. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* (1750), like Montaigne's footnote in *On Essays*, praises the Spanish for not burdening their colonies with attorneys:

[A] remnant of humanity led the Spanish to forbid their lawyers to enter America... Could it not be said that they believed that by this single act they had made reparation for all the evils they had brought upon those unfortunate Indians? (Hackett 7)

Rousseau takes the extreme position that placing lawyers in Spanish colonies would be an additional evil. Fielding's 19th century *The Author's Farce* depicts an Underworld in which the devil refuses "to admit any more lawyers because the kingdom is already too full of them." (Tucker 85) Unwelcome in the Spanish colonies, and not fit for Hell, the 18th and 19th century lawyer could only remain at home and tolerate the satire!

Contemporary Satire of the Legal Profession

Negative perceptions of lawyers are not limited to

historical literature. Popular media frequently recounts, and probably recreates, these stereotypes. According to one *Newsweek* writer, "[a]ttacking lawyers is more American than apple pie." (*Lawsuit Cha-Cha* 58) Even American zoos cash in on lawyer-bashing. The Dallas Zoo has an Adopt an Animal program that allows patrons who "think of lawyers as vipers who paralyze their prey" to name snakes after the lawyer-of-their-choice. (*Forked Tongue* 62)

Popular jokes about lawyers abound. Should you ever fall short of lawyer humor, simply listen to the lyrics of popular musicians like Don Henley, whose "Gimme What You Got" song from *The End of the Innocence* album pokes fun at lawyers: "You cross a lawyer with the Godfather, baby, [he'll] make you an offer that you can't understand." Of course, Henley's point is clear - verbal technicalities and unscrupulous lawyers can render simple legal tasks unintelligible to the layman. Curiously enough, law-school students and lawyers, themselves, seem to know the best lawyer jokes. A Columbia Law School student related the following joke to me: "Why don't sharks attack lawyers? Professional courtesy." Whether at the Dallas Zoo, or in everyday humor, lawyers are depicted as predatory persons with uncertain behavior and motivations.

Public perceptions of lawyers reach well beyond one-liners. A Harris poll rated the legal profession lower than garbage collectors in the public esteem. (Stem 213) Though once deemed prestigious, US lawyers now rank "ignominously at the bottom of the barrel." (Brown 6) Between 1976 and 1985, the Gallup poll found that 30 percent of respondents "rated the honesty and ethical standards of lawyers low or very low." (Abel 163) Consider the following informative statistics:

- ***Do lawyers work harder for rich clients than for poor ones? And does the legal system favor the rich? 60 percent of Americans say, "Yes."***
- ***Do "lawyers needlessly complicate their clients' problems?" 30 percent of Americans say, "Yes."***
- ***Do lawyers "fail to keep clients informed or to ensure that clients understand the situation, take on work for which they lack experience, and overcharge"? 40 to 60 percent of Americans say, "Yes."*** (Brown 164)

Given these statistics, Vice-President Quayle's remarks at the 13 August 1991 American Bar Association meeting must have validated many Americans' perceptions. "Does America really need 70 percent of the world's lawyers?" asked Quayle, who is himself a member of the Indiana bar. Another government official, Marlin Fitzwater, boldly stated that, "You never get into trouble attacking lawyers. Everyone ought to take every opportunity they can to bash lawyers. It's so easy." (*Lawsuit Cha-Cha* 58) But most Americans, like Associate Professor at Columbia University James R. Russell, do not say, "I'd rather join Shakespeare in Hell than go to Heaven, if there are lawyers in [Heaven]," simply because it's

easy to do so. People dislike, and even hate, lawyers for complex reasons that resonate throughout the Western tradition.

Why Do People Dislike Lawyers?

Why does the public bash lawyers? The high costs of legal action are one common complaint. Some critics argue that lawyers are the only winners in an expensive litigation process: "enormous prices for legal fees, frustration, and stress lead to the all-too-frequent result that hostilities increase."

You cross a lawyer with the Godfather, baby, [he'll] make you an offer that you can't Understand. (Don Henley)

(Gerber 86) The process of discovery, or pretrial search through the opponent's records, wastes time and money—an expense that is passed on to the client. The high costs are elevated by a legal "monopoly- a state-approved monopoly, like a public utility" that allows lawyers to self-regulate their industry and, hypothetically, elevate profits. (Stem xvii)

Economic pressure has caused a marked decline in professional quality. As law firms become increasingly business-oriented, public confidence decreases. (Brown 50) MegaLawFirms have become more common, leading to the loss of a professional atmosphere. Law becomes a trade, and the intimate lawyer-client relationship weakens. Large business firms are also less accountable to the individual client. When economic factors become a major concern, people also worry about greed. Money does not motivate all practicing attorneys. Many lawyers may intend to work at a big firm temporarily to pay off loans, after which they will resume a career in public interest law. Unfortunately, they are often held to the big firm by "golden handcuffs" that accustom them to their high-income lifestyle. (*Lost Freedom*) Even though these lawyers have valid concerns - to pay back loans, live well, and support a family comfortably ~ they are often perceived as greedy money-seekers.

The legal profession's intimate connections to politics heighten public suspicion. Neither politicians nor lawyers are highly-regarded for their ethical standards. Since judges are politically appointed, are they truly impartial? Some critics think not. For example, the Association of Trial Lawyers paid \$1.5 million for the campaigns of congressional candidates in 1990, making it the "ninth-largest political action committee expenditure in the country." (Gergin 44) To many Americans, this influence might appear unethical, and lawyers seem to be taking control of the country with their undue political influence.

Public perceptions are also shaped by those lawyers who behave immorally or represent unpopular clients. Chairman of the Commission on Organized Crime, Irving R. Kaufman, found that the number of lawyers serving organized

crime groups created a "disturbing trend." (Brown 35) Some lawyers help launder money, give legal advice to diminish arrests and convictions, and shield criminals with attorney-client privilege. Often, professional detachment allows lawyers to disregard personal morality in order to presume their client's innocence. Some observers have remarked that the truth is no longer an issue during trials, most of which "have degenerated into gigantic lying contests." (Gerber 116) Many lawyers use "expert witnesses" to make their cases, but these witnesses "are not always qualified and prey upon the sympathy of the jurors." (Lemonick 46)

Legal technicalities seem frivolous and intentionally abstruse to many laymen. As we saw in Henley's lyrics and the Renaissance satires, lawyers often speak in a language that regular people simply don't understand. "Legalese" alienates clients and "creates a rhetorical and communication imbalance." (Gerber 79) Laymen may resent their dependency on lawyers to interpret the law. An experienced lawyer describes his clients' frustration as follows:

a sense of impotence overcomes the client as he struggles to comprehend the vast ocean of rules, regulations, jargon and procedural machinations that even the most patient and articulate lawyer finds difficult to explain and justify to the layman. (Torgov 64)

The lawyer asserts himself as a middleman between the client and the law, or between the client and his dispute. As a middleman, the lawyer is an "affront to the vision which men carry within them of a paradise lost, and hopefully to be regained, in which lambs and lions will congregate without special assistance." (*What's Wrong With the Law?*) Like the serpent in Eden, lawyers represent a lost innocence in which contention is a mark of society, and litigation is the sign of democracy. The lawyer is a shaman who "magically negotiates the costly perils of courts and legal maneuver." (Hamett 3) Though public sentiment criticizes the unnecessary complexity of legal affairs, many issues actually are complex, and "forces of change are constantly at work, shaping and reshaping legal conclusion." (Hamett 7) While many people may not understand legal "jargon," there are others who find the profession's English men's club trappings to be similarly exclusive. The public may be irked by lawyers' exclusivity, and popular attitudes could partially reflect such frustrations. Attorneys also represent the status quo. Educated in precedent, lawyers tend toward traditional habits, rather than innovative change. The best lawyers are used to "perpetuate the power of the haves and preserving their leverage over the have-nots." (Stem xix) By using the legal framework, attorneys "extend it by interpretation into many niches of social life." (Geison, ed. 110) Thus, any defects in the social system are validated through the practice of law and can be blamed on the lawyers.

Lawyers are the bearers of bad news. For most people, the lawyer "spells danger" because of the legal expense and courtroom hostility that they prefigure (Hamett 3) The lawyer's slippery ability to find a loophole, "engineering

the potential escape from the seemingly inescapable obligation" seems under-handed and dishonest. (Hamett 98) Paul Smith, a second-year Columbia Law School student, remarked that, "fnjobody who wins a case complains about their lawyer." But, of course, not all clients win their case and those who don't are sure to blame their lawyer.

The Good News About Lawyers

The legal profession holds many ideals. Among the responsibilities of lawyers, Chief Justice Warren Burger said, "we place the public interest ahead of private gain." (Stem 3) The American Bar Association lists in its Code of Professional Responsibility "that every person in our society should have ready access to the... services of a lawyer of integrity and competence." (Stem 4) Responsibility lists are easy for judges and bar associations to make, but difficult for many lawyers to uphold. Historically, American lawyers have contributed enormously to the public good. John Jay, Daniel Webster, Abraham Lincoln, and Stephen A. Douglas are but a few prominent American lawyers. There were 52 signers of the Declaration of Independence, and 25 of them were lawyers. (Abel 175) Revolutionary American lawyers were dedicated to republican principles in service of their new country. The lawyer does have a duty to serve his nation, especially since he is "intimately connected with the essential regulation of society's affairs." (Hamett 6) In fact, many lawyers "want to work in areas of desperate need, such as law enforcement, environmental protection and legal services for the poor," but loan payments force them toward higher-paying jobs. (Ratzkin)

Lawsuits representing the individual may successfully check governmental or corporate power. Connecticut attorney Karen Koshoff co-chairs a breast implant litigation group at the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, and says that she "will sue people so that [she] can protect women." (Lemonick 46) In many cases, the "fear of lawsuits also forces drug

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companies to be honest." (Lemonick 46) When an industry does not ensure the safety of a product, litigation brings attention to the hazard.

Who do you think knows the most lawyer jokes? Lawyers, of course. The legal profession is highly conscious of public perceptions. Surveys indicate that "almost half of all practitioners worry that they are less highly regarded than other professions." (Abel 163) As a result, many attorneys actively strive toward higher ideals in order to improve their profession's image. Yet, lawyers' extroverted concerns seem to exceed healthy levels because "[l]awyers exaggerate public

distaste, displaying an almost paranoid belief that people view them as tricky, evasive, manipulative, overbearing, greedy, and cold." (Abel 163) Given historical attitudes toward their profession, it is no wonder that attorneys are highly sensitive to other peoples' perceptions.

Conclusion: Reformation and Reflection

How can lawyers reform their profession in order to achieve the high ideals that judges and bar associations have for them? David Hoffman, a Maryland law professor, suggested "Fifty Resolutions in Regard to Professional Department" in 1817 to improve the legal profession's image. Hoffman's resolutions included an end to self-promotion, unjust causes,

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or disingenuous tactics, and the renouncement of activities that compromise professional dignity or personal honor. (Gerber 57) Dan Quayle's 50-point program suggested at the 13 August, 1991 ABA meeting would cap punitive damages, discourage frivolous lawsuits (by making the losers pay the winner's legal fees), limit the waste of discovery, control the use of expert witnesses, and create alternatives for trials, like mediation and arbitration. When I asked Governor Bill Clinton, "Why does the public come down so hard on lawyers?" at a Democratic rally on 24 March in downtown New York, he responded, "Because we need more alternative dispute resolutions." Governor Clinton added that we should "have lawyers keep people out of the courts rather than in [the] courts." Like Dan Quayle, Governor Clinton understands the need for arbitration and mediation to reduce legal costs and unclog the court dockets.

To reduce the costs of litigation, we should develop "flexible, inexpensive nonlawyer rates" that allow laymen to handle minor transactions on their own, or with minimal assistance. (Gerber 99) As a result, lawyers could focus on relevant matters for which they're qualified, improve their image, and free laymen from their heavy dependence on the shamanistic lawyer. Should law schools adopt "loan forgiveness" programs, ideally paying off student loans for graduates who pursue public interest careers, and should the IRS stop taxing such "forgiveness," then we could divert legal talent from the lucrative private sector and into the starving public sector.

The public hates attorneys because they reflect the contention of society and the imperfectibility of humans. The vices of Medieval society were also reflected by their lawyers: "Because he is the agent of a litigious client, the pettifogging lawyer is a personification of the client's greed." (Tucker 38) Americans, like ancient Greeks, are quick to sue when they

want to protect their property, win compensation, or simply have their "day in court." How else does one explain the lawsuit of an American who claims that a bad haircut has "deprived him of his right to happiness?]" (*Lawsuit Cha-Cha* 58) There is a double-standard in contemporary America: people praise the aspirant law school student, but curse the vile lawyer. Morley L. Torgov, an experienced attorney from Toronto, summarized his feelings in a *New York Times Magazine* article.

To be a lawyer is to be looked at askance, sooner or later, because the mirrors we hold up to our clients more often than not reflect men who have not quite lived up to their code, or who cannot fight their own complex battles, or who are simply defeated by a world God created and the Devil keeps spinning.... The mirrors I hold up must reflect realistic images, no matter what. That is precisely my job. I remind myself over and over that I am not out to win a popularity contest. (Torgov 64)

Regardless of what reforms we adopt, the public will always live in a "love-hate relationship" with the legal profession because each lawyer will continue to be "both hero and villain," depending on whether he wins or loses his client's case. (Harnett 3) As Western tradition indicates, basic human natures remain contentious. And where there is contention, there are lawyers. The attorney's responsibilities do not include seeking public approval, but simply doing one's job with strict adherence to ethical standards of professional responsibility.

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Projections for the Palestinian Revolution

By Dave Eisenbach

Autonomy Equals Revolution

The establishment of an autonomous Palestinian state in the West Bank is not in the true interest of the Palestinian people. Those who think immediate autonomy would be another step toward a new and improved world order disregard the history of almost every revolution from 1789 to 1989. The history of Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan indicates that if the Palestinians remain patient, within 20 years, they will peacefully assume control of a democratic government with an established bureaucracy, legal system, and economy.

"Land for Peace" is a catchy phrase, but it is also a dangerous over-simplification which ignores political reality and historical trends. Israel's refusal to allow truly democratic elections and political freedoms has prevented Palestine from establishing a democratic tradition. Given the political oppression and violence of the last 25-year Israeli occupation, military and political withdrawal would be equivalent to the overthrow of an authoritarian or totalitarian system. Two centuries of history show that after the initial revolutionary euphoria wears off, the united revolutionary opposition (i.e. the Third Estate, Solidarity, and perhaps the PLO) splinters into conflicting groups that struggle to fill the power vacuum. Revolutionary states without democratic traditions slip into

anarchy, civil war, and/or tyranny as in the cases of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century French governments. Even if the Palestinians were to establish a democratic government immediately after their autonomy was granted, the lack of a democratic tradition would make them susceptible to the same civil strife and tyranny that undermined the Weimar Republic.

United They Seem, Divided They Are

After withdrawal, the PLO would not assume power as a united coalition government. The history and structure of the PLO shows that it is not a team of players shooting at the same goal. The PLO is essentially a cartel of various self-interested groups united to increase their own power. The guerrilla groups, which formed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, did not receive much attention and support from Palestinians until after the 1967 June War. During the war, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan not only failed to liberate Palestine, but also surrendered the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. Palestinians attributed these humiliating losses to the incompetence of the Arab armies and to the Arab states' lack of concern for the Palestinian people. Consequently, many Palestinians joined guerrilla groups, such as the original Palestine Liberation Organization, which was a puppet of Nasser, and Fateh, an independent guerrilla group led by Yassir Arafat (Cobban41) By 1969, most Palestinian military, political, economic, and social organizations saw that the only way to achieve their one common goal was to set aside their ideological conflicts and form an "umbrella organization" called the PLO. (Goldschmit 406)

The PLO is a diverse coalition of eight parties, movements and guerrilla groups, each with different leaders, ideologies, and agendas. Most of the groups in the PLO espouse one of three programs. One type calls for the unification of all Arab states and the subsequent use of a united Arab army to liberate Palestine. This ideology was adopted by the Arab Nationalist Movement, the precursor to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by George Habbash. A second type concentrates strictly on the liberation of Palestine. This limited commitment has been espoused by Yassir Arafat and his Fateh movement. The third type of group carries out whatever policies their state sponsors dictate, as in the case of the Iraqi-sponsored Arab Liberation Front, Lybia's Popular Palestinian Liberation Front, and the Syrian-supported Vanguardians of the popular War of Liberation, commonly known as Saiqa.

The PLO constitution reveals the tenuous relationship between its members. Since the various organizations of the PLO espouse conflicting ideologies, the PLO's institutions and policies must reflect the ideologies and needs of all groups. The PLO's constitution rests "the supreme authority" of the PLO in the popularly elected 400 member Palestinian National Council (PNC). The PNC's members are chosen by an informal process of negotiation between the eight member groups because elections would be impossible to hold among a population in diaspora and under occupation. (Long 294) This process ensures that the PNC represents all ideologies. The PNC elects an Executive Committee to determine the