

Fallacy #10, The Suppression of Democracy, Spooner Quote #3



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

There seems to be a coherent theme to this column's ideas, perhaps more than usual. All of them relate to proceeding without due consideration of principles and premises. How do we as a group of individuals on a vast continent get convinced that our leaders care one iota for what is on our minds? How do we allow ourselves to be browbeaten with logic fallacies? How do we get gamed as to how much representation we have inside the beltway? How do we fall for the ruse of majority rule?

Fallacy #10 - Slippery Slope

This is an ancient fallacy. If you don't kick Moses and his followers out of Egypt, pretty soon we will all forget completely about King Tut. If you let Moses and his followers settle in Israel, none of us will be able to sell our houses for kindling.

This is also an extremely modern fallacy. If you allow same sex marriage then the next thing will be armadillos mating with opossums, and we won't be able to handle the roadkill with bulldozers.

Who will pick the cotton? Who will build the roads?

The thing about the slippery slope bogus argument is that it has to leap over all of the intermediate possibilities. It presupposes that there is an unalterable straight line from the act, A, to the cataclysmic absurdity, B.

The person who plays the slippery slope gambit is probably on a pretty slippery slope himself. He has gone to a gunfight armed only with a knife. And no matter how clever is the first argument, it is usually a signal that there are only very thin arguments left. I take a slippery slope argument as an admission of weakness.

But it is amazing how sticky these slippery slopes can be. The state police here in Kentucky rode this broken down hobby horse for many a year: if you allow the growing of hemp we will not be able to identify illegal marijuana patches from our helicopters. Decades of misinformation grease had made the slope doubly slippery.

It is easy enough to say, don't fall for slippery slope arguments, but that sort of discipline will not keep your ignorant fellow citizen from falling. They have been taught at every turn, at every intersection with the collective, that mere survival is solely dependent on seeing every possible slippery slope. Fly, fly, fly away, and don't ask questions.

The Suppression of Democracy

I am watching the upcoming vote for the separation of Scotland from the United Kingdom with a keen eye. But I view its chances of success as likely as that some fly fisherman will hook and land the Loch Ness Monster. As the scoreboard keeper in the basketball arena of Western Kentucky University once observed, "There's no reason to lose if you're the one keeping score." The issue in Scotland is whether the Scots will have Queen Elizabeth II's state or their own. Furthermore, there is the question of who will drill the oil? Just as surely as oil is keeping Kurdistan attached involuntarily to Iraq, complete with its religious wars, then the decision will be made in board rooms and parliaments in places other than Scotland.

I have all kinds of empathy for my Gaelic brothers and sisters in Scotland. I am 7/8ths Irish. And how many different times did the Irish attempt to wrest their own land back from the visiting English? I am all American, and what did it take for our forbearers to gain our freedom (we might say it has not been gained yet) from the imperialism of Europe?

But the worst mistake was that the liberated chose to conduct their new affairs with all of the institutions of the old masters. While screaming homilies like "All men are created equal," "Give me liberty or give me death," and "Live free or die," we saddled ourselves with hoary king-bred institutions and the false assumption that there must be a rigid set of rules to make us free. We are after all just a replication of the English constitutional monarchy. We took on two monstrosities, republican government and taxation, so we could strut about with our half-baked notion of freedom like the powdered bigwig clowns across the briny deep.

We fought for no taxation without representation, but that is what we have today. In the 1600s, London was just a big village, and if you could hurdle some of the cognitive dissonance of the English class system, the anointed people could reasonably transmit their preferences to duly elected representatives. James Madison, in America, presumed we could have one representative for every 30,000 "approved" citizens. We are light years beyond that "ideal" ratio today. What the person in the street in the USA is thinking and

what her representative is thinking are so far apart that there is a black hole in between.

Lysander Spooner Quote #10

Majorities and minorities cannot rightfully be taken at all into account in deciding questions of justice. And all talk about them, in matters of government, is mere absurdity.

The original idea of democracy in Athens, Greece was to codify the desires of the populace. I wrote a paper awhile back on information processing in ancient civilizations. Pericles knew that every issue called forth a myriad of opinions, so the trick was to distill the issue to state it as a question that could be answered yes or no. This is the procedural reduction of diversity into binary code. And of course the ayes would have it. This plan required two fictions, the leader must designate only those citizens whose collective thought would only reach the extremes that the leader could tolerate, and the majority would, with ironclad constancy, always prevail. Politicians and the oligarchy became quite adept at manipulating such a system. Instead of keeping everybody happy, the politician only had to keep one elector, beyond half of the decision-making body, co-opted.

Since Pericles and the Golden Age of Athens, every attempt at democracy or representative government has failed. There is a majority in every lynch mob. And if the majority does not obey the oligarch then the old majority will be discredited and a new one installed.

And Spooner saw the most tragic application of majority rule. The application of the will of the wisp majority preference in law is the most violent abridgement of justice that one can imagine. What do we call it when the Supreme Court of the US reaches a 5-to-4 decision? We have thrown the fate of an individual to the whims of a tug-of-war. Isn't that what we used to call trial by ordeal? If you perish when we light the fire under the stake to which you are bound, then you must be guilty.

You cannot make a system of justice merely by calling it a justice system. Otherwise, in that sense the scourge of Genghis Khan was justice. You cannot make a government of the people just by calling it a representative government based on democratic principles. You cannot make a slope slippery and have a flat Earth at the same time.

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