

Libertarian Wishful Thinking

Editor's Pick. Written by Robert Higgs.

As a rule, libertarians incline toward wishful thinking. They constantly pluck little events, statements, and movies from the flow of life and cry out, “Eureka! Libertarianism is on the march!” With some of my friends, this tendency is so marked that I have become amused by its recurrent expression—well, there he goes again!

Some of this tendency springs, I believe, from their immersion in abstract thought and writing. Many of them have read hundreds of books and articles on libertarianism itself or on closely related ideas and personalities. They love to point out that ideology controls everything and to remark that as soon as we can bring a substantial minority over to our way of thinking, the whole social and political apparatus will tip from tyranny into liberty—rather as the old Eastern European satellites of the USSR (seemingly) abandoned their Communist regimes and substituted much less oppressive regimes almost overnight, in most cases with little bloodshed.

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