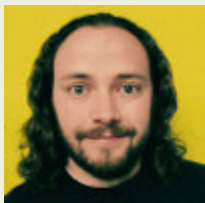


More Power, Less Liberty



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“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing sporadically at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

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I had some thoughts on something that I thought I’d put down here. Though people, especially young people, are becoming libertarians in great numbers, it seems that most people are quite comfortable with the size and scope of the myriad levels of government they are subjects of. And I think this has to do with a confusion people have between power and liberty. Let me explain.

Since the secession from Great Britain and the founding of the United States, the US federal government has usurped all sorts of powers and grown to never before seen or imagined size and complexity. In other words, liberty has slowly, and at times very quickly, declined. But I don’t think it’s commonly *felt*. And I think the reason is because of the growth in power that the average America has.

What I mean by power is personal power. Power to move, to do, to be what someone wants to be. We can travel anywhere in the world in hours, send a message anywhere in seconds, and meet someone in real-time thousands of miles away. The power we have in these regards is a million times greater than even the generation before us had when they were our age. It’s almost unbelievable until you understand how the technology works.

Most people don’t try to start their own business, so they don’t now how onerous and costly government requirements can be. Most people budget themselves based on after-tax paycheck, so they don’t see and feel the sting of income and payroll taxation. Most people don’t care to consume illegal drugs. And a growing number of people don’t even produce anything of real value to others, as they work for the administration and maintenance of government. But what they all have in common is the greater and greater power they wield in their day to day lives, thanks to the growing technology industry.

So long as living and their pursuit of happiness continues to get easier and easier, I don’t think people will truly realize all of the freedoms and liberties they have lost. I’m not

bemoaning technological progress. I love it, as anyone does. What I'm bemoaning is the lack of understanding in society to our politically depressing state. However, there is a silver lining.

That silver lining is what power that technological progress gives to someone to ignore or bypass their government. The Internet is a wonderful example. People can trade on the Internet for all sorts of legal and illegal products and services, with legal and illegal currencies, and many aren't forced to pay tax. They can even trade "dangerous" ideas, the biggest threat to government. This is technological progress usurping government power.

So while technological progress may be blinding people to the liberties they've lost, it's also seems to be helping them to see and work through the facade and irrelevance of government. And perhaps this is much more than *just* a silver lining.

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