



LETTER: Libertarianism not simple, just better

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Marvin Edwards (“Libertarians: Not as simple as it seems,” *The Daily Progress*, Dec. 5) implies libertarians are anti-government, anti-tax and pro crony-capitalism. This depiction is contrary to my experience as a libertarian-leaning individual.

Libertarianism is a diverse political philosophy. It holds that pursuit of happiness is best realized through voluntary association between individuals. Libertarians love liberty. This philosophy is typically, but not always, consistent with a constitutionally limited government and the freedom of individuals to live, speak, think, work and assemble, *so long as they don't infringe on the like freedoms of others*. Most believe that governments should be limited in scope but strong, well funded, and large enough to decisively perform their duties. Libertarianism does not promise a perfect, simple or even happy world.

History and current events clearly indicate to us, however, that the most prosperous, healthy and happy societies tend to follow access to freedom. Poor people in relatively free areas like Singapore, Hong Kong and New Zealand earn eight times more than the poor in regulated states like Venezuela, Cuba and Congo. They live, on average, twenty years longer. China's and India's rise from poverty continues to follow decreases in regulation. It's now easier to open a retail business in Beijing than in Charlottesville.

Our government's occasional deregulation of some tasks pales in comparison to its overall regulatory growth (now 81,000 pages in the Federal Register) and spending (now 24 percent of total U.S. production). Are we better off than when we were regulated with much less? Libertarians differ on the proper extent of government involvement on various issues. Most agree, however, that each intervention should be empirically and continuously justified: What will this cost? Who will pay for it? Who can best determine how this money should be used?

Before passing on freedom based on party rhetoric, check out the Cato Institute or Mises.org. Better yet, read Locke, Bastiat, Milton Friedman, or Jefferson. I agree with Mr. Edwards that libertarians are not “... sweet old ladies offering a delicious apple.” What they offer is just better than what we have now.

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