



How is Authoritarian Singapore More Free Than America?

September 21st, 2011 Noah Kristula-Green

There is a [new study](#) out which shows that the US is suffering from a [decline](#) of “Economic Freedom”. The study was produced by the Economic Freedom Network, which is a project of the Canadian-based Fraser Institute.

Studies like this can be useful because they reveal the cognitive dissonance taking place on the libertarian right. It turns out that some policies which libertarians assume to be incompatible with freedom actually exist in many free societies, and vice versa. Here are two examples from the study:

1. Singapore is ranked very high on the index thanks to its support of free trade, lack of burdensome business regulations, and its respect of property rights. So what sort of healthcare system does Singapore have?

It turns out they use [mandatory](#) health savings accounts. Cato institute scholar Bryan Caplan notes that “Singapore is no libertarian health care paradise”. Singapore provides universal coverage and makes extensive use of price controls in its healthcare sector. Yet these policies are compatible with an “economically free” nation.

2. The study reveals its libertarian bias by having countries ranked on “Sound Money”. This study prefers countries which practice “low and stable inflation.” Now let me be clear, low inflation and price stability is desirable in many circumstances, but not necessarily in all circumstances.

Which country ranks #1 in “Sound Money” for the study? Japan! The country which has suffered from crippling deflation and a lost decade of growth. A lost decade that many blame on the Bank of Japan’s lack of monetary stimulus.

Even more ironically, Japan also happens to be ranked #22 in the study, way below America’s ranking of #10. Sound money does not seem to be helping Japan out of its economic malaise.