

People vote for freedom with their feet and effort

BY LINN AND ARI ARMSTRONG,

“Why are they all running to Colorado? What have they got down there that we haven't got?” So asks a villain in Ayn Rand's, “Atlas Shrugged.” He complains about Colorado's primitive, lazy government that “does nothing outside of keeping law courts and a police department.”

A young worker answers, “Maybe it's something you've got that they haven't got.”

High taxes, economic controls, and intrusive politicians and bureaucrats kill production. Unfortunately, fearing Colorado's economic stagnation, the politically connected call not for more economic freedom but for more taxes. They act like doctors who prescribe bloodletting for anemia.

A recent Qwest-funded report from the Metro Denver Economic Development Corp. bears the title, “Toward a More Competitive Colorado.” But some of the report's recommendations would lead to higher taxes, less competitiveness, and a weaker economy.

The report notes that Colorado ranks well in areas of health, education, and investments. Yet, rather than promote more of the Western liberty that made Colorado prosperous, the report worries that politicians aren't spending enough of other people's money on college, preschool, infrastructure (however that is defined) and welfare.

“A Gordian Knot exists in Colorado's Constitution that makes governing a challenge,” the report complains. That seems to be code for “gut the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights.”

Though especially concerned about education, the report declines to discuss freeing colleges from state controls, expanding competition for K-12, and cutting taxes so families can better afford college and philanthropists can donate more.

The only constitutional change we need is to repeal Amendment 23, which sets education spending on autopilot regardless of economic conditions.

Meanwhile, as the Daily Sentinel reported Nov. 17, the Pew Center declared Colorado in “fiscal peril” because, darn it all, people get to vote on tax hikes.

Either people restrain the politicians or the opposite becomes true. The more the political class oppresses the people, the more people move away or reduce their production.

Rand's novel is about the nation's top producers going on strike against oppressive politics, some moving to Galt's Gulch where they can live in freedom. In “Free to Choose,” Milton Friedman warns that people vote with their feet, moving where they can enjoy the fruits of their labor.

This is true between states. Regarding last year's U.S. Economic Freedom Index, lead author Lawrence McQuillan summarizes, “People are moving to the freest states and fleeing the least free states.”

Earlier this year, the Wall Street Journal declared New York the “tax capital of the world.” The paper noted, “According to Census Bureau data, over the past decade 1.97 million New Yorkers left the state for greener pastures -- the biggest exodus of any state.”

The same is true around the world: People tend to leave more repressive countries and move to freer ones. Recently we celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall, built by tyrants to keep an oppressed people from moving

away.

Britain suffered a “brain drain” as their doctors sought to escape socialized medicine. When introducing the National Health Service, Aneurin Bevan bought off doctors for their political support, reportedly saying, “I stuffed their mouths with gold.” Upon implementing the new system, he declared, “We now have the moral leadership of the world.”

Yet many doctors suffered indigestion. Some found that this gold tasted a lot more like thirty pieces of silver.

Others rebelled against the new political controls. They wanted no part of the “moral leadership” that put bureaucrats in charge of health. Some of these doctors moved to the United States.

If we go further down England's path, some doctors will move out of our country and cater to medical tourists. Others will retire early.

We've seen examples large and small of people giving up. Higher car fees have convinced some to sell the extra car or put off purchasing a new one. Some work less for taxable income and trade more goods and services (though such exchanges are supposed to be taxed, too).

Chris Edwards recently published disturbing figures at Cato Institute. He writes, “While consumption, exports, and the government sector were up, private investment has fallen through the floor.” Fearing more federal political controls, Edwards calls this “the death of private investment in America.”

Meanwhile, unemployment nationally has crept over the double-digit marker, despite (or partly because of) President Barack Obama's “shovel ready” stimulus projects.

No need to look very far to figure out what it is that Obama is shoveling. An ABC headline illustrates part of the problem: “Jobs ‘Saved or Created’ in Congressional Districts That Don't Exist.”

As one of our friends wondered, “You mean taking money out of the private sector, creating money out of thin air, and indebting future generations actually doesn't make us more prosperous?”

If we want to return to prosperity in Colorado and in our nation, we need less political interference and more economic liberty.

Linn Armstrong is a local political activist and firearms instructor with the Grand Valley Training Club. His son, Ari, edits FreeColorado.com from the Denver area.

[http://www.gjfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?
AID=/20091123/OPINION/911229981/1021&parentprofile=1062&template=printart](http://www.gjfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091123/OPINION/911229981/1021&parentprofile=1062&template=printart)