

Our Return to Slavery

By Roy Minet (Rev. 03/04/14)

Slavery was tolerated for the first several decades of our country's existence. However, those opposed to this reprehensible practice eventually succeeded in outlawing it. The watershed moment was President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. But sadly, over recent decades, we are witnessing a return to the practice of slavery.

Early slave owners kept slaves in order to capture the fruits of their labor. Among other things, slaves planted, tended and harvested their owner's crops. That is the very essence of slavery: you slave away working for the benefit of someone else, not yourself. You do not own the product of your labor. Your life, or most of it, is not your own.

Note well this paragraph from our excellent Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

If each person is to have the rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," slavery is clearly precluded. Each individual must own himself and therefore must also be entitled to the fruits or benefits of his own labor. Freedom demands this and few would disagree.

As stated in the Declaration, the whole purpose of forming a government is indeed *to secure these rights*. Since governments create no wealth, they must take it by force from the productive private sector in order to operate. According to The Tax Foundation, federal, state and local governments were able to secure rights by taking a total of 5.9% or less of the fruits of our labor from 1776 through 1900. So, on average, people were slaves for about three weeks each year in order to have their rights protected by government.

It might have been argued that this was a reasonable tradeoff. However, since 1900, the 5.9% has steadily increased and is now hovering in the 30% to 33% range. The steep "progressivity" of current tax laws results in some people being slaves for a few days of the year while others are slaves for between a third and half of their year. It should be obvious that the rights of some people are not being secured, they are being violated! The modern version of slavery is no more justifiable than the old form.

To repeat, individuals own themselves. They are entitled to keep the product of their own labor as long as it has been earned without using force or fraud. The only way one can earn wealth in

a free market economy is to do a good job of satisfying the wants of others. Everyone should cheer when someone gets rich since that is the evidence that they have helped a lot of other people.

Our slavery situation *will* get worse. Governments are not confiscating enough to pay for what they spend. Instead, they are borrowing heavily and these debts will have to be paid eventually with higher future taxes.

Bear in mind this quote attributed to George Washington: “Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”

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