

**TAXES, LIBERTY, AND INCOME**

Country	2017 Tax Revenues % of GDP	Human Freedom Index Rank	GDP per Capita, PPP, 2017 (Current International \$)
Switzerland	28.5	1	64,712
Ireland	22.8	4	75,648
United Kingdom	33.3	9	43,269
United States	27.1	17	59,532
France	46.2	33	42,850

Sources: OECD, Cato Institute, World Bank

**When the Bureaucracy Goes Too Far**

by Richard W. Rahn

**Zurich**

What do the Paris riots, Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the dusky gopher frog and Peter Wallison’s new book “Judicial Fortitude” all have in common? They are all signs that the peasants have had it with the bureaucratic state and the smug elitists who have been ruling the globe. Despite never-ending attempts to quash it, the basic human desire for liberty keeps re-emerging.

Kings and assorted tyrants have attempted to rule their fellow man from the beginning of time. Democracy was created as a way of allowing the people to express their grievances and obtain change without violence. Constitutional republics, such as the United States and Switzerland, were created as a way of restraining government’s ability to diminish the liberties of the people. The forces of control retaliated by empowering bureaucracies to ignore the will of the people.

The European Union was created as a bureaucratic state with little democratic and judicial oversight. The EU bureaucracies did what bureaucracies always do, claim more power, and increasingly micromanage the people who they were supposed to serve.

Bureaucracies are expensive, and those who inhabit them love to spend other people’s money. The people are endlessly told that the government must be bigger in order to protect and care for them — no matter how large the government. Every thinking person knows it is a lie.

The enclosed table from selected countries shows why France is most prone to having violent riots. The French suffer from the highest tax burden of the OECD countries, yet have a lower per capita income than the Irish, Swiss, Americans and even the British. Next door to France is land-locked and partially French-speaking Switzerland, which lacks the resources of France, yet somehow manages on average to be more than 50 percent richer and much freer than France. The haughty elitists in Paris might ignore this comparative failure, but the average Frenchman gets it — and appears to no longer be willing to take the abuse from Paris.

The French elite have been leaders in the environmental movement, lecturing the Trump administration and others about how wonderful they are for imposing \$7-plus per-gallon gasoline tax on their citizens, even though such a gesture has no measurable effect on global warming. Meanwhile, the Indians and Chinese continue to build coal-fired power plants at a furious pace.

If you have been to Geneva and other Swiss cities in recent years, you may have noticed that they are much cleaner than Paris. One main reason is they are richer, and when you are rich, it is easier to clean up. Poor countries in Asia and Africa are often environmental hellholes because they can neither afford pollution abatement equipment or systems nor do they keep the country clean.

The British noticed that being part of the EU was making them relatively poorer with a great loss in national and individual freedom — so they revolted by voting to leave.

The United States in times past was the richest and freest nation in the world. Those distinctions have been eroded over the last number of decades. Part of the relative decline was due to other nations becoming more free — both economically and politically — but much of the decline has been self-inflicted.

The relative decline of the United States was widely recognized and was central to the Trump presidential campaign. The fact that someone as imperfect as Mr. Trump could win against both the Republican and

Democratic establishment was a clear revolt against the existing order — which many of his critics still do not get. Fortunately, the United States has the means to self-correct without the violent riots that Paris has experienced. The reason the United States has increasingly become a bureaucratic state is the failure of all three branches of government, but particularly the courts, to uphold the U.S. Constitution.

In his new book, “Judicial Fortitude,” Peter Wallison, former general counsel for the U.S. Treasury, has detailed how the courts acquiesced to Congress, giving more and more discretion and power to administrative agencies — often in clear violation of the Constitution.

Congress was supposed to make law and oversee the implementation of the laws and regulations they passed. As government grew, Congress found it more and more onerous to make all of the decisions that the Constitution requires of them, so they delegated many of their powers to unelected bureaucrats, until the bureaucracy grew to what in effect became a new — and often out of control — branch of government.

Mr. Wallison argues that not all is lost if judges stop out-of-control administrative agencies as the Constitution requires. The good news is that some judges seem to be getting the message and that majority members of the Senate understand that they should only appoint judges that are likely to uphold the Constitution. Last month, in a unanimous vote, the U.S. Supreme Court told the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that it could not take away a land owner’s property rights to protect the “dusky gopher frog” — that did not and in fact could not live on the property. The American Republic may have been saved by an invisible frog.

*Richard W. Rahn is chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth and Improbable Success Productions*

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