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Atlas and Prometheus

In Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, "men of the mind" - the innovators and technologists who improve and maintain our civilization become so disgusted with socialism and elitism that they quit. The mythical Atlas, who carries the world on his back, shrugged.

Ayn Rand erred, however, in that she misunderstood the depth of love that true scientists, engineers, and technologists have for their work. In the decades since Ayn Rand wrote this classic novel, socialism in the United States has steadily risen and freedom has greatly diminished - especially for technologists. Oppressive government taxation, regulation, and litigation have reached levels that Ayn Rand could only dimly have imagined.

Yet, still the technologists have continued to work. Prevented from building more nuclear power plants, they keep improving the efficiency of those they still have. Prevented from providing the technology that would have truly revolutionized human health, they build incrementally better technology for the health system that the medical monopoly permits. With many of their chemical substances banned, they make do with the remainder. They have even managed new technologies, especially computers and the Internet - technologies that give hope that truth about their plight may finally be heard.

Starved of capital for technological advance and surrounded by government rules that make advance almost impossible, they still inch forward to the limits of their abilities. The improvements that they have managed to make obscure the tragic loss of the improvements that they would have made had freedom and free enterprise not been suppressed.

The American people do not know - nor will they never know the marvelous world in which they would have lived had not their resources been wasted by thieving politicians and bureaucrats, while their technologists were shackled by socialism and elitism.

Moreover, the technologists - the men of the mind - have never really understood how much they are viscerally feared and disliked by those who have formed the chains that bind them.

When the minds of men are free and the resources of the world are apportioned under free enterprise, those who rise to leadership are those who combine original thought, resources, and strong work ethics. In a shackled society, those who rise to leadership are those who use their minds to enslave and control others. The latter people fear men who can actually make and do things, and they work constantly to maintain control over them.

Previous free generations of Americans built dams, bridges, chemical plants, steel mills, railroads, and airplanes. Nothing seemed impossible for them. They even traveled to the moon. They built the marvelous landscape of industry that still, haltingly, maintains the American way of life.

What, however, has been the primary change in the American landscape of the past 30 years? The change has been in the skylines of American cities. These steel and glass boxes have not been built to house factories where things are made. They have been built to house paper shufflers who are largely occupied with activities that enslave and control the

American people.

Yet, still the men of the mind have worked. Still, they have inched forward, and the non-producers in the skyscrapers are frightened. This elite does not care for advances that improve the lives of all Americans. They care only for themselves. If they could reduce America to the poverty of ancient Rome - but with themselves as masters - they would do it.

While Atlas carried the world on his shoulders, it was the mythical Prometheus who stole the secret of fire from Zeus and gave fire to man. This gift and further guidance by Prometheus set off a tremendous technological advance which provided man with brick, mathematics, the alphabet, sails, ships, healing drugs, mining of metals, and many other technological gifts.

Zeus had little interest in man and had intended for humans to live primitively until they died off. Furious with Prometheus, Zeus had him shackled to a crag high in the Caucasus Mountains where, each day, an eagle came to dine on his liver - which grew back each night, only to be ripped out again by the eagle. Thus was Prometheus tortured for his gifts of technology to man.

Now, it is time for torture of the real Prometheus - the American men of the mind. While most of their children and grandchildren are being educated - in government tax-financed schools - to fear and hate the technology that their fathers and grandfathers have created, the older men are condemned to watch the dismantling of the civilization that they and their predecessors made possible.

Useful energy is required for all technology. For more than 30 years, American technologists have been so suppressed that they have been unable to build significant new domestic hydrocarbon and nuclear energy capacity. Now, the elitists are telling them that their desire to produce useful energy and use it in technology is bad for the Earth. As a further affront, the very words and science of the men of the mind are being twisted and falsified to justify these lies.

The Congress and President of the United States have now agreed upon laws that require the burning of food for fuel - rather than hydrocarbons and uranium. They have further agreed upon laws that ban the use of the Edison light bulb. In California, a law is being considered that will require government-controlled computer technology to ration energy usage in private homes.

Throughout America stand rusting mills and empty factories - grim monuments to the efforts of the men of the mind and stark reminders of the victories of the manipulators in the skyscrapers.

American scientists and engineers are not tied to a mountain crag. No eagle dines upon their flesh. They are subjected to a worse torture. They must watch as pseudoscience serves as the excuse to destroy the technology they have built and to prevent the technology they could have built. And - perhaps worst of all - they must watch as technology that should have been built in America - is instead built elsewhere by those who have learned from their example.