

THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN

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Monday, July 4, 1977

Let Freedom Remain

RESPECT for freedom of the individual distinguishes the free world from totalitarian societies. That is what we celebrate on this 201st anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the birth certificate of the United States of America.

Independence suggests not requiring or relying upon others or something else. Liberty specifies freedom from arbitrary or despotic control. Freedom implies the power to choose what one does or says.

These are tenuous possessions. Most people around the world either never had them or have lost them. American colonists shocked the world by their stand for them in 1776.

Undoubtedly, most Americans still regard independence, liberty and freedom very highly, but there are many who seem to be bent on limiting or destroying them.

Our freedoms are no more secure than the vigilance of the people and the integrity of those in political power.

Religious freedom is not challenged as a right, but a strong antireligious movement is developing that might do so.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press have been challenged, sometimes with negative results. For example,

by declaring pornographers have a right to distribute their smut, courts allow repulsive materials to be forced upon others.

Economic freedom is another liberty that appears to be in danger, largely because of increasing government control of our incomes, our businesses, our jobs and our resources.

A motive that stirred colonists to rebel against the rule of England was too much government. Most Americans apparently still hold to this view, but government is getting bigger year by year anyhow.

"If Americans should ever come to believe that their rights and freedoms are instituted among men by politicians and bureaucrats, then they will no longer carry the proud inheritance of their forefathers," said Ezra Taft Benson, secretary of agriculture during the Eisenhower administration.

As on every such occasion, it behooves American citizens to reflect today upon our independence, our liberty, our freedom and the source from which these virtues are derived. Then we may be able to see where our nation may be headed in time to stop undesirable trends, that freedom may remain in our land and overflow into the world.