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Book Review **by Paul Armentano**

Government Creep: What the Government Is Doing That You Don't Know About by Philip D. Harvey (Port Townsend, Wash.: Loompanics Unlimited, 2003); 159 pages; \$12.95.

Shopping for a new car?

For your “protection,” it will come equipped with airbags. Don’t want airbags in your vehicle? Tough. Not only is it impossible to buy a new car without them, but federal law prohibits owners from disconnecting airbags without express permission from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And even those drivers who obtain the necessary authorization will be hard-pressed to find a mechanic willing to perform the procedure. Of the more than 30,000 authorizations granted by the NHTSA, only 1,000 have been honored by garages and dealers because of the incomprehensibility of the federal regulations and mechanics’ fears of litigation.

The fact that citizens in a free society should have to beg the government for the right to modify their vehicle however they see fit (as long as their modifications pose no risks to other drivers) is a small, but illustrative example of what author Phillip D. Harvey calls “government creep.”

“Tell everyone you meet that our huge federal government can exert power over their lives and you’ll find that most, if not all, will agree,” Harvey writes in his new book, *Government Creep: What the Government Is Doing That You Don't Know About*. “But very few people realize how much power today’s government has over private citizens and how tyrannically it can — and does — exercise that power.”

To shed some needed light on this subject, *Government Creep* presents 17 stories exemplifying “the devastating impact of an ever-bigger government on millions of ordinary lives.” Though the characters and events portrayed in the vignettes are fictitious, they are based on all-too-real events. Topics include: the federal government’s growing criminalization of so-called consensual crimes, the questionable use of military tribunals after September 11, the adverse

impact of federal regulations on small businesses, the unintended consequences of government subsidies, and the loss of individual liberties attributable to America's so-called war on drugs.

Harvey believes that the public is generally unaware of the extent of government creep because Big Brother's motives often appear benevolent and its targets typically seem deserving of federal intervention. In truth, however, he contends, the government seizes power arbitrarily and by force. This federal power-grab negatively affects all Americans, making each and every one of us potential targets of the state's wrath.

"Because government creeps, we tend to believe that the strip searches, the confiscation of property [and] the incarcerations will always happen to someone else," he writes. "But because they are happening more and more to 'people like us,' we must stand up to government creep if we are to maintain our freedom."

What will it take for Americans to wake up to the ever-growing (and very real) threat of government creep? Harvey hopes his book will be a start. The author may not be the most imaginative storyteller, but in today's Brave New World, he does not need to be. Written in clear, plain language, *Government Creep* is designed to make the feds' continued encroachment on our individual lives vivid and personal. By highlighting the wide-ranging and numerous abuses of government power — whether it's the state's use of criminal statutes to prosecute those who braid hair without a license or the federal government's twisting of asset-forfeiture laws to seize private property in the name of "fighting drugs" — Harvey proves that government has invaded virtually every nook and cranny of our lives. But now that you know, what can you do about it?

The author suggests a five-point plan or, as he calls it, "five simple rules for dealing with government." Assert your rights; obey the laws that you have to obey and that you should obey; disobey laws that are dysfunctional; make your voice heard; and last, but most important, "Talk this up."

"Remind people that government creep endangers their rights and liberties," Harvey concludes.

Most of all, remind people that these things are going on now, [and] that they happen to [all] Americans ... and that the process is building a mountain of programs, taxes, and special interest payments that more and more threaten our status as free, independent, and responsible human beings.... Government officials seem impelled by an inner force to try and control our lives. All of us must resist this trend, or government creep will eventually, gradually, overwhelm us.

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