

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Deluged with technology

It's amazing how quickly we take technology for granted. Apple introduced the iPhone just ten years ago. Other smart phone brands are even newer than that.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Yet three-quarters of all Americans own smart phones, as of late 2016, and 92 percent of young people do, according to the Pew Research Center.

Interestingly, low-income people use smart phones more than wealthy Americans, especially to look for jobs or apply for them.

Every day in Pottstown, you can see motorists glancing at smart phones, and seemingly half the kids walking out of our middle and high schools are staring into their handheld gadgets instead of looking where they're going.

We all seem to be mesmerized.

Technology and mass production have given everyone marvels that even the super-wealthy could not have imagined six decades ago.

In 1950, only a handful of Americans had televisions — black and white — and there was not much to watch on them. Everyone was tethered to landline communication.

Now people can keep in touch with each other wherever they go, by voice, text, and sharing photographs. They can listen to music wherever they go. And the Internet provides a cornucopia of information and entertainment 24 hours a day.

The recent election has clearly demonstrated a large percentage of Ameri-

cans — particularly the white working class — angrily see themselves as going backward economically.

It is truly outrageous that continuous tax cuts for the rich in recent decades have concentrated wealth more than ever in the hands of the few.

Nationally, about 85 percent of our nation's assets are shared by just 20 percent of the population.

But if we want to measure quality of life in terms of material things, almost everyone has more of them than previous generations.

Does it make us happier? Not so much.



TELEVISION COMES TO POTTSTOWN

Although broadcast television became feasible in the late 1930s, it did not become widespread until the 1950s. Twice as many TVs were sold in 1950 alone as in all previous years combined.

As Norman Rockwell's famous painting shows, our skylines were transformed in the following few years, as thousands of rooftops sprouted antennas so people could watch any one of three major broadcast networks.

For the first time ever, households could enjoy all sorts of visual entertainment without leaving their living rooms.

Today, cable and satellite television and the Internet offer hundreds of programs, to be watched at any time of the day or night, anywhere, on TVs, computers, and smart phones.

Thankfully, also, the antennas have disappeared from Pottstown housetops.