Security versus Liberty

“Give me security, or give me death!” No, that’s not quite how it went. In 1775, Patrick Henry said, “Give me liberty, or give me death.” He believed that we as humans have certain inalienable rights, as stated in the Declaration of Independence. These are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In today’s society, as they did in Henry’s, we have an issue with right to protection. Our use of technology has evolved and is perceived as one of those rights. We want to have freedom to do what we want, yet be tucked in our beds safely each night. Can we get the best of both worlds?

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln dealt with issues very similar to what we are facing today. Everyone wants a type of ensured safety without being put under the microscope, for that is an intrusion of privacy. Our constitution guarantees us rights that make our actions in daily life possible. As outlined in Amendments to the Constitution, we have the right to freedom of speech, and press. Our states have the ability to make laws regarding regulations. Whether the usage of internet is good or bad really comes down to the individual. Just like any decision, it is constructive or destructive. The actions individuals take is up to them. If one is sending out spam messages, shouldn’t he be caught? What about the average internet user who obeys all rules and doesn’t like the idea of being tracked?

Essentially, the internet is a means of communication, an amendment right. It makes tasks simpler and can assimilate large amounts of information easily. Everything from our traffic systems to where we store our money is made convenient by this technology. Let’s look at two separate situations. Johnny love’s working on his computer, and can hack into systems, sending out “spam” to thousands of people a day. Now, let’s look at Susan, who always uses proper internet etiquette. She enjoys the internet and social networking, and uses it for personal and business purposes. Does Susan know that her social networking is being invaded, or that if she clicks on the weight loss advertisement on the right hand column of her computer screen her device may get a virus, or that when she buys items online, her identity might be stolen?

Conversely, technology can create chaos, rather than security, possibly because we are so dependent on it. So, should we track internet usage to catch people like Johnny? One of the things Johnny and Susan agree on is privacy. What will it be- security, or liberty? If Susan has nothing to hide, why is tracking her such a big deal? Is Susan, an honest user, the one deserving protection? Does Johnny, too, deserve protection?

Yet, Patrick Henry, never conceiving that our rights may include such a thing as the Internet, did perceive that basic rights may be infringed upon.