Symonds (2010) showed that the cohomology ring of a finite group $G$ with a faithful complex representation of dimension $n$ is generated by elements of degree at most $n^2$. This was a remarkable advance, since no bound was known before. Symonds’s proof combined equivariant cohomology with commutative algebra (Castelnuovo-Mumford regularity). We give better bounds for the cohomology ring of a $p$-group. The methods also apply to the Chow ring of algebraic cycles on $BG$. 