

A FAMILY CONVERSATION ABOUT LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT

Anonymous - May 2012



A conservative "friend of a friend," sent this to a liberal family member, and copied some friends. I ended up with a copy and have received the writer's permission to post this on my website, without attribution. Remember, we are stepping into the middle of a "family conversation." Let's call the writer "Doc" and the family member "Sandi." This fits well into the discussion I started at my website section on "Liberal and Conservative Thought." Blame the illustrations on me - I added them to the original text.

SB - May 14, 2012

Dear Sandi:

A good example of irony The food stamp program, part of the Department of Agriculture, is pleased to be distributing the greatest amount of food stamps ever. Meanwhile, the Park Service, also part of the Department of Agriculture, asks us to "please do not feed the animals" because they may grow dependent and not learn to take care of themselves.

Doc

My Dearest Doc:

Good point. Yes, we should not help others for fear of dependency.

The recent increase in food stamps, as we know, is directly related to the inability of people to "depend" on their employment to feed their families. Dependency on a job to pay for food is what most Americans want. Most food stamp recipients are mortified that they need help at all. The increase in use of these programs comes as a result of the loss of stable employment in the private sector and in the shrinkage of jobs in the public sector.

How great that now the private sector can show us how to solve this dependency problem by providing jobs to Americans who use food stamps!!!! Yes, let's stop safety nets for fear of breeding way too much dependency!

Sandi

Dear Sandi:

I would like to clarify a couple of things. **This illustrates one of the differences between liberal**

and conservative belief systems. I do not know of a single conservative who advocates helping no one at all through government 'entitlement' programs. Any attempt to portray conservatives in this way is basically a slander against them, just like saying that all liberals would like to see all functions in society taken over by the government.

Conservatives believe that there are no Utopian answers to important life questions. People are seen as flawed and subject to corruption by their very nature. Unlike with liberals, there is no hope among conservatives that humans can be perfected out of their patterns built on tens of thousands of years of human experience. People have both good and evil in them, with a heavy dose of the latter, and these are part of what we call human nature or the human condition. Contrary to the beliefs of Utopians, children are not born good. They need to be socialized into being good, or they are likely to become bad. In only one generation, all the wisdom that has been developed throughout human history could be lost if parents do not teach their children to be good.

One of the unfortunate flaws that all adults possess is unresolved negative patterns from childhood that continue to operate in us. We do not wake up one fine morning and discover that we are fully adult. One of these flaws to be struggled against is dependency. There is a natural tendency to be dependent. Newborns are 99.9% dependent. If they refused all help they would die. There is also a natural impulse to be independent. If you remained completely dependent you would be unable to do anything for yourself. Whatever we reinforce, we generally get more of. Children who are encouraged to remain dependent tend to take longer to grow up, if they ever do so, and even then perhaps only partially. Children who are encouraged to be independent tend to do so as well. There are, of course, always exceptions to these general rules, but that does not invalidate them as general rules.

The United States is truly an exception in world history, in that the founders started with the premise that people are flawed, and have a dark side. The problem was figuring out how to take this into account when creating a new form of government. They set up a system of numerous checks and balances to try to reduce the likelihood that our baser instincts could gain control, such as turning into a dictatorship due to the impulse for power and tyranny that is replete throughout history. Even though we don't have a monarchy, we do invest a lot of psychological importance in our President (e.g., he is our Commander-in-Chief, rather than relying on a committee whenever national defense decisions have to be made. Even here, Congress is supposed to declare war. The President then is invested with the authority to conduct the war as he deems right.) Some of the founders even realized that one of the dangers of a democracy, since it is based on people whose human nature is inherently flawed, was that people could ruin it once they realized they could get whatever they want by voting for it. Of course, the trick here is to make sure that other people pay for it. This is the point that I believe we are now at. As a result, we are well on the way to bankruptcy financially and decay morally.

Instead, liberalism maintains that we are all born good, that social forces cause us to be bad or evil, and that we can perfect humans by wise political leaders who govern us and force us or try to manipulate us into doing what is best for us, whether it is who to associate with, how to talk to each other, what to eat or not eat, what to drive, who you can hire, who you can fire, what health insurance you must purchase whether you want to or not, etc. Where this has been allowed to have full rein over our lives, it has caused the greatest amounts of suffering, torture and death in human history. (See the Soviet 'Union', Communist China, Nazi Germany, Communist Vietnam, Islamic 'republics,' etc.)

Specifically regarding food stamps, no one I know, including all conservatives I know, thinks that

people who are genuinely in need because they cannot care for themselves should be left to fend for themselves. One question is, who are these people? Also, why does the number of 'poor' keep climbing, seemingly endlessly? Could it be that the underlying liberal impulse is based on emotion and thus has no end. Once you gain the power to force others to pay for your ideas about helping others, and who qualifies for this help, what will ever restrain this from growing endlessly? Where does the impulse to help others end? Won't we always be shy of perfection? In fact, we seem to be losing ground the more we impose "do-gooding" on those who can afford to pay for it and those who get caught up in being the recipients of it. Are the poverty rates going down? Are unwed pregnancies going down? Three months of unemployment benefits gives way to six months, which leads to 12 months, which then becomes 99 weeks, which then becomes....what?

It is sad that the Department of Agriculture truly prides itself on growing the number of people on food stamps. They even began an advertising campaign at universities and colleges around the country to inform students of their 'right' to food stamps. The numbers keep growing, but the problem of poverty is not at all solved.

I wouldn't minimize the 'fear' of making people dependent. It is rational to caution against this because childlike dependency is a flaw within most or all adults. I remember students cheering crazily when President Obama announced at a rally that, under his new nationalized health care plan, they will now be considered to be dependents under their parent's policies until age 26. To the liberal mind, this is a great advance in the march toward social justice and a someday-to-be-realized utopia. To the conservative mind, this lengthening in the definition of childhood is frightening.

One of the main reasons that people can't 'depend' on their employers to feed their families is that the costs of being an employer are so very high due to regulations, fees, taxes, and employer-mandated health care.

Another reason, which is infrequently realized by liberals, is that people are generally paid what they are worth. We would all like to be paid more, and we all want to feel that we are worth more, but when the marketplace says we are not worth what we think we are worth, we get upset and look outside of ourselves to find villains. The '1%' are the current fashionable villains of the day. It is much harder to say to ourselves, maybe I need to work harder, get more education or training, cut back on my 'necessities' like television, cable TV, several cell phones per family, pre-cooked (more expensive) foods, two or three cars, housing beyond my means. These are all 'necessities,' right?

The idea of a 'safety net' has long ago turned into a farce. Genuinely needy people will always exist, and should be helped as a moral value. But one consequence of defining 'the needy' as encompassing more and more individuals is that genuinely needy people can't receive as much as we all might agree to provide them but can't because the available funds have to be spread out so broadly. Even so, a recent study found that entitlement programs average about as much in benefits as working does, on average. Any fools out there still wanting to work?

Another negative consequence of constantly growing the size of all of our 'entitlement' programs is that the money collected by the tax collector is not available for other uses by private charitable individuals and organizations, of which there are many.

Finally, underlying the issue about food stamps or other forms of charity is the fact that conservatives and liberals disagree on what the primary source of giving to others should be.

Conservatives believe in private charity, whereas liberals believe in government charity. This is why studies show that conservatives give more in private charity than liberals as a group, and that Americans give far more than people in other industrialized nations, including in Western Europe.

Mallard Fillmore by Bruce Tinsley



Of course, government programs aren't called charity, because that might hurt the feelings of many recipients. Instead, we call it 'entitlement programs' to emphasize that you have it coming to you because it is your right. (I am not here talking about Social Security or other programs that we pay into throughout our working lives--although I would love to see significant changes in these programs, which are government-run Ponzi schemes.) the term 'entitlement' also controls the language by setting up good guys fighting for the 'rights' of the little guy versus bad guys who only care about...guess who?

One thing that liberals are experts in is demonizing conservatives. If you believe in smaller government, you are uncaring and selfish. If you believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman, you are homophobic. If you dare to suggest that there are Islamic fascists, you are Islamophobic. If you are against affirmative action, you are a racist. If you believe a nation needs to have secure borders, you are xenophobic.

I appreciate the caring that many people, left or right of center, have for other people. However, in the end it isn't our intentions that matter, it is our actions and their consequences. Bad intentions can lead to good actions, and good intentions can lead to drastic consequences.

Sorry for going on like this, but I got started and then couldn't stop! One thing I am certain of--that for those who have fundamentally different beliefs and values, there will be no impact of my thoughts. But that's OK. **If you are not a conservative, you probably have little idea about how much demonization occurs on a regular basis against this group.**

Most Sincerely,
Doc