

Litmus Testing the Fence-Sitters

I'm proud of the fact that I'm politically engaged and fairly politically astute. Frankly, I don't understand those who don't care about politics or its effects on their lives. Don't they know that the only innocent thing about bystanders is their naiveté? Do they really think that by not taking sides they'll exempt themselves from the consequences of other people's actions?

Ever seen the TV cameraman on the sidelines at a football game get mowed down by a wide receiver running dangerously close to the out-of-bounds line? Everything's going fine. He's capturing some great footage until he realizes that a mano a mano collision is about to take place and HE'S one of the manos! Because he's spent all of his time looking through somebody else's lens he's missed an opportunity to positively affect his own situation and get the heck out of the way before this oncoming freight train of a man turns him into tapioca pudding.

Anyone who stands at the sidelines of politics with his arms folded, dispassionately watching cataclysmic events take place deserves to be hit by that wide receiver, and I for one have no sympathy for them. I guess it's because my skin has been toughened these last 20 years of the Clinton, Bush and Obama Administrations (not to mention the 20 Congresses that have come and gone and the really pathetic laws they've turned out). I could no longer stand idly by and say, "Hmm, isn't that an interesting piece of legislation (like the Affordable Healthcare Act); I wonder how that will affect me?" than I could say to the tax man, "Could you please take a little more of my money? I was only going to leave it to my children anyway." Ya, right.

A good friend of mine lives in Texas, and I was talking with him about these fence-sitters. He remonstrated against them in a typically Texan way. He said that, "Suppose you're watchin' two 2,500 lb. bulls fightin' in a corral. They've been at it for an hour, knockin' themselves out with their repeated attacks, but now they've kicked the fence boards loose, are tearin' up the corral and puttin' the rest of the herd in danger. What do you do? Ignore 'em and hope they'll come to their senses before they destroy the place or do you step in and get involved when you see the way things are goin'?" Brother, that's what we call a Texas no-brainer."

True fence-sitters and real non-committals aren't the only casualties on the political battlefield nor are they the only ones giving *freedom* a bad case of indigestion by their lack of participation. Political correctness seems to be pushing us and our opinions so far underground that we may need to start applying a litmus test to everybody so that their ideologies are visible to the naked eye and so that we know who we're talking to.

For those of you who haven't thought about it for awhile, litmus is a coloring matter that comes from lichens and the litmus test helps identify two solutions. When litmus is added to acids it turns red and when it's added to alkaline solutions it turns blue. *That is not a political comment, my friends (though it is an interesting thought). It's just chemistry.* Our litmus test could be my friend's bull-in-the-corral situation. Here's what you do, when you're with someone whose political philosophy you're unsure of...

You repeat that situation and wait for your conversation partner's answer. If he says he'd wait until the bulls get tired so they fall over from exhaustion, he's probably a very doctrinaire, laissez-faire type who won't intervene no matter how serious the situation is. If he says he'll get a couple of the boys to jump over the fence and try to lasso the bulls and pull them apart, he's probably a theoretician and has never done this before. So, basically, he has no clue of the danger he would put himself and his pals in.

If he says he'll pull out his Winchester and kill one of the bulls, chances are he's a doer not a talker, *but not necessarily a long-term thinker* as he clearly hasn't thought about how the shot might stampede the rest of the herd AND send one of his best 'producers' to the big stockyard in the sky.

If you find someone who says he'll fix the fence boards first, sequester the exposed herd and saddle up his ranch hands on their horses so they can guide one of the bulls into an open chute, then you've found a person who understands *human* nature as well as animal nature. My advice is, get him to run for public office.

We must start pulling people off the fences and making them aware that their voices count and that none of us can afford to just vote 'present' while bad things happen to our blessed land. This high-pitched disagreement about what kind of America we want and the demonization of the opposition is eventually going to tear down the fence the undecideds are sitting on. They had better get ready and choose for themselves which side to come down on. Let's hope for all our sakes that it's the side of commonsense, conversation and the Constitution.

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