

The Social Liberal vs. the Fiscal Conservative, Contradiction



Send him mail.

"Food for Thought" is an original column appearing every other Tuesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Norman Imberman. Norman is a retired podiatrist who loves playing piano, writing music, lawn bowling, bridge, reading, classical music, going to movies, plays, concerts and traveling. He is not a member of any social network, nor does he plan on becoming one. Dr. Imberman has written a fantastic Christmas song which he had professionally recorded as a demonstration record. He is looking for a publisher, or A & R man, or record producer to listen to his song. It deserves to be a permanent member of the lexicon of familiar and favorite Christmas songs. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FFT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Note by the author of this column: I picked up this article a few years ago but I neglected to record the source, so I used the word "anonymous" to attribute the author. The reader may therefore take the following article with a grain of salt. However, it is a lesson of great significance because I know through conversations with many liberals that this article is representative of the thinking of most liberals. Any liberals who read this article written by one of their own kind should recognize themselves. The anonymous liberal author wrote as follows:

For many years, as a young man, I subscribed to the idea that I was a social liberal, while at the same time, a fiscal conservative. Recently, I decided to analyze what those words meant. After all, words do have meaning.

As a social liberal I favored such issues as welfare and food stamps, government-run education, rent control, price control, wage control, government regulation of industry, social security, Medicare and socialized medicine in general. In short, I favored most of those programs that were favored by socialists and the Democratic Party.

As a fiscal conservative I championed such issues as low taxes, a balanced budget, low or no deficit spending, low or no inflation, full employment, and economic stability. In short, I favored most of those programs that were favored by the Republican Party.

It was always my contention America would be a safe, secure, prosperous and harmonious

nation with the passage of liberal social programs along with fiscal conservative programs.

Recently I started thinking about the following. There are a few well-accepted and correct axioms in the field of logic that are apropos. The first is that contradictions can exist in one's mind but they do not exist in reality. In fact, by definition, a contradiction is proof that one of two opposite beliefs cannot be true at the same time. By definition, the existence of a contradiction shows that something is impossible. The old cliché that "nothing is impossible" is incorrect. Some things are impossible. Coming to the conclusion that one is holding to a contradiction is man's method of correcting himself from false reasoning and false beliefs. That idea, along with the syllogism is the most useful intellectual tool available to the human mind.

Another well-founded axiom is that "something cannot be gotten for nothing." This means that whenever something of value is created, someone has to exert the energy and/or finances to make it possible. In fact, even the attainment of financing is the result of the expenditure of energy so that it all boils down to the expenditure of human energy. Values do not suddenly appear out of thin air. (We must even expend our own energy in order to gain the value of inspiring oxygen into our lungs.) That is why the axiom, "there is no such thing as a free lunch" is a well-accepted expression. It is true that someone other than the creator of the value can get something for nothing, but someone must produce it before it can be consumed or obtained.

With the foregoing in mind, I realized that I was maintaining many contradictions in my thinking. So I finally reasoned that I couldn't be in favor of all of the issues in my liberal portfolio, while at the same time, profess to be a fiscal conservative? All of the social programs that I favor must be paid for, since they don't just appear out of thin air. These social programs must be financed out of the pockets of those who have expended their energy in earning a living, whether they approve of those programs or not.

As a social liberal, I now think about any issue in which I believe people should have free choice. For example, I believe that people should be free to choose what store they shop in or what automobile to purchase or what movie to see or whether or not to terminate a pregnancy. However, I seem to be against the issue of free choice in other areas. For example, I believe that I am against free choice when it involves what wage an entrepreneur may offer to a worker or what rent a landlord may charge to a tenant, or what price a producer can charge for his products or which doctor one can choose? Having freedom of action by permission is a contradiction in the use of the term "free choice." No one can escape the fact that contradictions do not exist in reality.

I can no longer champion low taxes, a balanced budget, low or no deficit spending, low or no inflation, full employment, and economic stability while at the same time, favoring all of our liberal social programs, for it is an attempt to make the impossible work. It is true that

one can believe it in one's own mind, but it is impossible in reality. One cannot eat his cake and still have it.

In reality, we liberals who profess to be fiscal conservatives are just dye-in-the-wool liberals on all issues, whether they are social or fiscal issues. What we really mean by the term "fiscally conservative" is that we want our politicians to spend responsibly and such a desire makes us fiscal conservatives. However, just because we characterize ourselves as fiscal conservatives does not make us fiscal conservatives in practice. Whenever we champion new social programs or expanding already-existing social programs, we are not being fiscally conservative since all that expansion necessitates more spending, more debt, higher deficits or more printing of money—not less.

We know from past experience that politicians cannot spend responsibly. Deficits and debts always increase, and in the long run prices increase due to wayward printing of money by government. Excessive printing of money hides the fact that another tax has been inflicted upon the unwary citizen. Economic instability is forever threatening while at the same time our liberal profligate social programs are running wild, and the very existence of our entire society is being threatened. We liberals think that the only way to place our country on the right track is to pass more social legislation to improve the chaos that the original programs created. But that is an example of a contradiction squared. Whenever individuals or entire societies ignore their contradictions, things fall apart. It is Mother Nature's method of punishing us for ignoring her laws. The solution does not involve doing more of the same. One of the humorous definitions of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting to get a different result. So what are we liberals supposed to do with this information? What are our choices?

1. We can stop fooling ourselves and remain social liberals and admit that, by definition, we are really fiscal liberals too, since we want to continue to spend more and more on social liberal programs while at the same time raise taxes, print more money when the taxes are not enough to sustain our recommended spending, and borrow more money at the same time. We know that all such fiscal liberalism raises the national debt, devalues our money, raises the deficit and creates general hardships and chaos all around.
2. We can become consistent fiscal and social conservatives across the board or even libertarians or voluntarists.
3. We can continue fooling ourselves, and hope that suddenly Nature will reverse her Laws and make contradictions exist in reality and ignore the consequences of such activities. In that way we can assuage our consciences and at least feel proud, while the country veers toward a precipice of destruction. We get to feel good in trying to help those who are less fortunate than us, while totally ignoring the pro-liberal policies that created the circumstances that made them less fortunate in the first place. After all, it is the intention

and the good feelings that matters, not the results. Our entire Democratic Party Platform rests on those “good feelings.” That is why we are commonly called “bleeding heart liberals”, an appellation of which I am proud. (If it is the results that are important then we must convert to the libertarian or voluntarism camp).

I recently brought this realization to the attention of a fellow social liberal who claimed to also be a fiscal conservative, like I. When I mentioned that he was espousing a contradiction, he admitted that he realized that fact. His response was, “so what”.

Self-delusion is one of the most destructive forces of the human mind. One might as well call a tree an automobile but once you try to drive that tree, you’ll find out the truth. Once something is known to be true, the truth of it cannot really be avoided unless one had a mental disease. Self-delusion is a mental disease.

As an individual who grew up in New York City, who came from an FDR-loving background, I am willing to sacrifice the contradiction concept to the idea that we are the good guys who are trying to help the “little guy”. How can I do otherwise? How can I give up a lifetime of dedication to liberal ideals simply because I now realize the numerous contradictions I support.

I have solved my dilemma. I am proud of my good intentions. My concern for the “little guy”, the underdog and the underprivileged should not motivate me to abandon those concerns simply because I know that contradictions cannot exist in reality and in spite of the fact that I understand the dire consequences of ignoring it. I too say, “so what”. I’ll stick to my mental disease.

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