

Left Libertarian, Right Libertarian



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“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing most Mondays at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

You may have heard about the political philosophy known as “left libertarianism.” This philosophy mostly agrees with all of the political left’s (progressives, Democrats) complaints and goals about our society, but differs in that its solutions are based on libertarian principles. In other words, “leftist ends, libertarian means.” I sympathize much with left libertarianism. I also, however, sympathize much with what we could call “right libertarianism,” or “rightist ends, libertarian means.” Let’s talk about both.

Left Libertarianism

Leftist complaints about society include income inequality, wage slavery, capitalistic exploitation, environmental degradation, and institutional racism. Each of these, I believe, are real problems. In my opinion, statist economic regulation and property exploitation either created or have enhanced these problems. For example, high costs of owning a business (required licensing and other regulations) reduce the options that poor people have in the market. Because business is to some degree prohibitive, poor people are thus left working for somebody else. Instead of braiding hair for cash at home, one without much else by way of skills must work at, say, Walmart, because permission to braid hair for pay is only granted to those who have received a certain amount of schooling (cha-ching) and outfitted their house with handicap access and safety equipment (cha-ching).

And so it goes with every other leftist complaint about modern society. It is well within the walls of reason to expect each of those problems to be reduced or disappear entirely in a free society, hence many libertarians identify with leftists on problems, but have the understanding that only libertarian, or free market, solutions will fix them.

Right Libertarianism

So what can we say about rightists and their gripes? It is my understanding that the political right (conservatives, Republicans) want to, among other things, eradicate abortion, promote religion and virtuous living, secure gun rights, and protect capital. Though how I

define “virtuous” is probably a bit different than your typical rightist, each of these, likewise, are desirable to me. I, too, want to eradicate abortion, vice, gun control, and the pilfering of privately-held capital by government. But once again, the solutions to each of these problems can be found in the elimination of the state, and other voluntaryist measures.

If the welfare state didn't create dependency and broken homes, and public schooling didn't separate children from their parents, methinks teen pregnancy, and therefore abortion, would be far less of a problem. Also, if the welfare state didn't exist, religion and mutual aid would play a bigger role in aiding the less fortunate in our society. Stronger communal bonds between rich and poor would be fostered. As everyone would have responsibility for their own safety, gun rights would be well protected. And more, though private capital would have to compete on a level playing field with worker co-ops and other socialistic business practices, it would be protected from legal thievery. As it stands, private capital is either stolen by the state or used to line the pockets of lobbyists as a means to securing political advantages over competitors. Those don't seem like ideal uses of business resources.

Final Thoughts

Both the Left and the Right have many honorable goals (and some not so honorable). Where they falter is in their means. Creating a free society is the only way that their goals can actually be reached. Using politics is a double-edged sword. Making progress in one area invariably means regressing in others, either on the left or the right. If I am a left-libertarian because I am a libertarian that sympathizes with leftist ideals, then I am also a right-libertarian. Many of the Rights' goals are no less honorable or desirable than the Lefts'. I'll take whatever will lead to greater peace, prosperity, and happiness *for all*, but I'll take them under the banner of liberty.