

Balance

I am a voting Democrat. I have always voted Democrat. I have reasons for this that would appeal to Republican politicians: I am a socialist.

OMG, you are text messaging Sean Hennety as you read this. A **SOCIALIST**!!!! Next stop Marx and Engels. Actually, we don't call me a "socialist" in our country. We call me a "liberal." We are taxed, this produces governmental revenue and some of it goes towards Social Security (get it? "SOCIAL Security") and Medicare ("Socialized Medicine"). We socialists are discussing making healthcare affordable for everyone whether or not they make sufficient income. How dumb is that? We are...gasp...talking about taking on the health industry and reducing the costs, actually negotiating ("appeasement?") with pharmaceutical corporations like every other industrialized (read "socialist") country in the world.

What an astonishing idea: the wealthiest country in the world, with the highest GDP by far, actually making health care available to poor people? Preposterous.

Perhaps I exaggerate. We aren't the wealthiest country in the world measured in GDP per capita. Luxembourg is. Right behind the USA is Guernsey. Guernsey you might ask? Tough to beat those Guernsiens in the GDP business, but we did it! Measured in absolute terms, we beat everyone. Our GDP is around 11,500 give or take a couple of thousand. The next best economy by this measure is the European Union, a collection of countries, then China. We have 1/5th of the entire world's GDP according to World Fact Book at this website below. To be fair, I exaggerated also if you measure GDP by growth rate. Ours is only around 4.5 percent per year while Macau is a whopping 15.6. Don't mess with the Macauians in the GDP growth business either.

http://education.yahoo.com/reference/factbook/countrycompare/gdp/4d.html;_ylt=ArYnXanzANUW4j05AwOFpXPPECYF/

Of course the argument against things like healthcare for everyone goes like this. Where does it stop? Give someone anything for free and they won't work for it. There are fair examples of this argument: the generational welfare system of old, for example. And does the government owe its citizens comfort as well? Should everyone have a nice place to live? Should they have TV on the benevolence of the government? How about hookers? Why not a chicken

in every pot and a hooker in every garage? Any decent socialist government would provide jobs, housing, TV and a pet gerbil for each and every one of its fine socialist citizens, wouldn't it?

Good argument. We should have let people starve during the Great Depression then we wouldn't be saddled with all these dreadful entitlements with the ungrateful Baby Boomers charging at us old folks. We wouldn't have had the inland water system with that socialist Tennessee Valley Authority. Of course an alternative to socialism during the 1930s could have been fascism, as many countries including Argentina, Germany, Italy and Japan, chose then. But it wouldn't be socialist.

As I said, we don't call our socialists socialists. We call them either liberals or, the latest euphemism, "redistribution of wealth" people. I wouldn't presume to call tax rebates to wealthy people "redistribution of wealth," or socialist, would you? I certainly wouldn't call paying for a war by borrowing money from other financially competing countries "socialism" either. Of course not. The government buying interest in corporations, banks and brokerage houses certainly isn't socialist. It is "responding to a financial emergency."

Socialists apparently do silly things. They "tax and spend." Another dumb idea...raise taxes when you want a war, for example. Why not borrow...again from competing countries. Would we then be called "borrow and spend" socialists? Or would it be described as "prudent fiscal debit management."

I know you are asking the key question. Why would a smart, good looking person like me agree to be called a socialist? More or less because I think government has the responsibility to take care of the less advantaged. I know this is very controversial, especially among the fine, upstanding Christian fundamentalists in this great country. People living under bridges are there as a result of poor decisions. People who retire without any addictions, financial or health problems are able to do so because they made good decisions in their lifetimes. Hard work rewards, laziness should be punished. Pick themselves up by their damn bootstraps, it is said.

Most Christians think the expression "God helps those who help themselves" comes from one of the gospels or St. Paul. It comes from Ben Franklin actually. Jesus, on the other hand, said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit", but I know about scripture. Taken out of context, there is some word directly from God that will justify all human behavior. So Jesus also said, "The poor you will always have with you." What he didn't say, was "So to hell with them. Reward

the rich.” Actually he said that it is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter the kingdom of God. I’ve always thought that metaphor is pretty funny. I can just see this big, ugly camel trying to squeeze itself through this needle. Who says Jesus didn’t have a sense of humor.

So I’m guilty. I think business is good, but not god. I am not fond of people like former Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan who just now admits he erred thinking good hearted, God fearing financiers wouldn’t be greedy and would somehow police themselves. Further, I think our form of government, while having survived over two hundred years of all kinds of challenges: a civil war, two world wars and more than one financial disaster including the Great Depression...I think it is broken. Even the “illegal aliens” right wing nut, Lou Dobbs, agrees with that. I hope it not irretrievably broken, but I’m not at all sure the influence of money on our Constitution is correctable. This presidential election will exceed a billion dollars. Obama will have spent six or seven hundred million and the tightwad McCain, a measly four hundred million. That is obscene. Both parties are in the pockets of big business....and they won’t go away easily.

But back to my un-American, traitorous, tree hugging, commie-pinko, bedwetting, socialist thinking. Unfortunately, while I say I am socialist, I also am a fiscal conservative. I know any reader of this essay will say the two objectives is an oxymoron...but I contend having a social conscience is not antithetical to paying as you go, if, of course, there is a corresponding change in governmental spending priorities. If we provide health care we can’t, for example, afford this never ending occupation of Iraq. If we want to pay for work on our crumbling infrastructures, we may need to redirect our spending from Afghanistan to South Dakota. And as for taxes, FDR raised taxes in the middle of the Great Depression to those who could afford it, to pay for the WPA projects. Why shouldn’t we do something similar today and rethink the pay scales to teachers in our public schools, rewarding good ones, similar to what we used to do in IBM? What I want in Washington is better balance, not ideological scripture.

I know, I know. You want me to run for president, but you are going to be sorely disappointed. I’m even older than McCain, though far more amusing. I don’t know if Obama can achieve something like what I’m suggesting here...but he has some chance of doing it if for no other reason he’s young enough, seems willing to kick some ass and seems to want to bridge the ideological gridlock that has paralyzed our government. Can we get big business out of our government? I doubt it, but maybe Obama can attract

different big businesses with different agendas than the NRA and hedge fund manipulators.

We shall see.