

The Highjacking of Conservative Philosophy to Sell Liberalism

☒ One of the big political frustrations conservatives have had in recent years has been the left's successful re-writing of the English language. By this, I'm referring to the proven ability of coordinated liberal mouthpieces, through the process of repetition, to remove the traditional definitions of certain words and terms and replace them with entirely new meanings.

Take the word "access" for example. We've heard it spoken ad nauseam throughout the debate over who should pay for people's contraceptives, and it's being used entirely wrong.

The traditional definition of *access* is "the freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something." That was the understanding I had of the word when I learned it as an elementary student, and the definition pretty much remained intact all the way up until after the Democratic party took back the White House in 2009.

The word *now* apparently means, "the convenience of receiving something at someone else's expense." At least that's the definition that would *have* to be recognized in order for the word to accurately reflect the rhetoric of the Sandra Flukes of the world, and those who believe a great injustice was done to women by the Supreme Court's recent *Hobby Lobby* ruling. If you recognize the old definition, the ruling of course didn't deny access of *anything* to *anyone*. Only if you use the new meaning does the charge actually make sense.

Unfortunately, perception is now reality. Repetition and the inclination of the national news media not to challenge those they agree with has let the American Left frame debates with

whatever rhetoric they like. Thus, the word “illegal” is now largely absent from the illegal immigration argument, government *spending* has become government *investment*, and *opposition* is now *obstructionism*.

Heck, the left has even found a creative way to avoid distinguishing between individuals and organizations in their rhetoric. I can't tell you how many times I've read a headline or heard a remark from a liberal in the media beginning with “Fox News Says...”, and followed by some egregious statement, only to find out that the person who actually made the statement was merely a guest or contributor on the Fox News Channel. Only when trying to marginalize conservatives does an entire network get cited for the remarks of a single individual appearing on that network. After all, when Bill Maher says something outrageous, no one accredits the quote to “HBO.”

Maybe Frank Luntz is to blame for this. When he used to peddle his book “Words that Work” incessantly on television, I thought he was making only a marginally effective point about marketing. I'm finding out these days that I grossly underestimated the power of a few misused words to change the way Americans look at issues, or to even create issues out of thin air.

Liberals have gotten so good at this that they're now even using conservative philosophy to sell liberalism.

I couldn't believe my ears, a few months ago, when Democrats began promoting the results of a CBO report, that concluded the Affordable Care Act would reduce the American workforce by 2.3 million people, as a *good* thing.

“This was one of the goals,” said House Minority Leader, Nancy Pelosi. “To give people life, a healthy life, liberty to pursue their happiness. And that liberty is to not be job-locked but to follow their passion.”

Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid, used similar rhetoric. "People shouldn't have job-lock. We live in a country where there should be free agency. People can do what they want."

These people, with a straight face, actually applied the hallmark conservative principles of *freedom* and *liberty* to having Americans' non-participation in the workforce be subsidized by those who *are* paying taxes. Some Democratic strategist even came up with the term "job-lock", not to describe a limitation of job opportunities in a weak economy, but to describe the burden of having to actually work for a living.

This stuff really is unbelievable.

A week or two ago, the aforementioned California Senate candidate, Sandra Fluke, received a great deal of mockery on Twitter for supporting an initiative against something called "wage theft." *Wage theft* is the kind of term you would expect a conservative to use when describing the over-taxation of someone's job earnings. And I'm sure that's exactly what the "wage theft" opponents were banking on when they came up with the phrase.

As it turns out, the anti-wage-theft campaign is a lefty movement designed to squeeze as much money out of private employers as possible, without any consideration whatsoever to the hefty portion of earnings that the government soaks right up.

Going back to the Supreme Court's *Hobby Lobby* ruling, we kept hearing the message over and over again from the left that employers should be kept out of women's medicine cabinets. People were shown on television, holding up protest signs in front of the courthouse that read, "Birth Control: Not My Boss's Business."

As Jonah Goldberg pointed out in a piece for the National Review, conservatives *agree* with that sentiment, and that's

precisely why conservatives *supported* the Supreme Court's ruling. People upset with the ruling are actually the ones that believe birth control *is* their employer's business, because they want the federal government to force employers to *make* it their business.

Yes, conservative philosophy is being twisted into faulty rhetoric to sell liberalism, and there's ample evidence to show that it's working.

I suppose the silver-lining to come from this is that the conservative message is apparently still a strong one. If it wasn't, liberals wouldn't be trying to steal it for their own purposes.



The challenge for conservatives has to be to start doing what liberals have been doing: *Coming up with a new language to better sell their ideas to the American public.*

For far too long, conservatives have relied on commonsense messaging to garnish public support and win elections, but that just isn't working anymore. The electorate has largely abandoned logic. Today's culture is driven by emotion and knee-jerk impulses. Conservatives need to understand that, and start getting creative if they hope to build majority support again.

It certainly won't be easy – especially with a mainstream media culture inclined to work against them – but it *can* be done.