

It's All About Big Government Left-Right Differences: Part V

Clarity is conservatives' best friend.

If most Americans were clear about the differences between Left and Right, they would not vote Democrat in nearly the numbers they do. The Left understands this, which is why most left-wing rhetoric is dismissive of conservatives' character – “sexist,” “intolerant,” “bigoted,” “hateful,” “xenophobic,” “racist,” “Islamophobic,” “homophobic” – rather than conservatives' positions. By focusing on conservatives as people and characterizing them as bad, the Left successfully deflects attention from its positions.

This brings me to explaining Left-Right Difference No. Five: How the Left and Right regard the role of the state (or government).

This is such a significant difference that it might be the defining difference between Left and Right. Without the belief in an ever-expanding state, there is no Left. Without a belief in limited government, there is no conservatism. Moreover, understanding this difference is essentially all people should have to know in order to determine whether they are on the Right or the Left.

The Left believes the state should be the most powerful force in society. It should be in control of educating all of its children; it should provide all the health care for all of its citizens; and it should supervise just about all other areas of society. There should be no competing power. As to the all-important question of how much government is too much government, I have never encountered a person of the Left who had an answer to that question.

Conservatives believe the individual is the essential component of a good society, not government. The government's role in society should be limited to absolute necessities such as national defense and to serving as the resource of last resort for citizens who cannot be helped by other citizens, private organizations or charities that donate money and time.

Conservatives understand that as governments grow in size and power, the following will inevitably – yes, inevitably – happen:

1. There will be ever-increasing amounts of corruption. Power and money breed corruption. People in government will sell government influence for personal gain. This is as true for America as it is for Africa and Latin America, where government corruption is the single biggest factor holding these nations back from materially progressing.

2. Individual liberty (outside of sexual behavior and abortion) will decline. Liberty is less important to the Left than to the Right. This is neither an opinion nor a criticism. It is simple logic. The more control the government has over people's lives the less liberty people have. The bigger the government the smaller the citizen.

3. Countries will either shrink the size of their government, or they will eventually collapse economically. Every welfare state is a Ponzi scheme, relying on new payers to pay previous payers. Like the Ponzi scheme, when it runs out of new payers, the scheme collapses. European countries, all of which are welfare states, are already experiencing this problem to varying degrees.

4. Taxes are constantly increased in order to pay for ever-expanding government. But at a given level of taxation, the society's wealth producers will stop working, work less, hire fewer people or move their businesses out of the state or out of the country.

5. The big state inevitably produces large deficits and ever-increasing – and ultimately unsustainable – debt (national, state and city). This is only logical. The more the state hands out money – to state employees as salaries and pensions; to government agencies (education, environment, energy, transportation and myriad others); and to individual citizens (monthly cash welfare grants, rent subsidies, health care, unemployment benefits, education, college loans, meals, food stamps, etc.) – the more the government employees and agencies, and the citizens who receive government aid, will demand. None of them has ever said, “No more, thank you. I have enough.”

Greece’s unpayable debt is only the beginning. Unless big governments get smaller, they all eventually will collapse of their own weight – with terrible consequences socially, as well as economically.

6. The 20th century was the most murderous century in recorded history. About 200 million people, the great majority of them noncombatants, were killed, and more than a billion people were enslaved by totalitarian regimes. And who did all this killing and enslaving? In every case, it was a big government. The bigger the government the greater the opportunities for doing great evil. Evil individuals without power can do only so much harm. But when evil individuals have control of a big government, the amount of bad they can do is unlimited.

7. Finally, the moral impact of big government on its citizens is awful. Not only do people stop taking care of others – after all, they know the government will do that – but they stop taking care of themselves, as well. And the more people come to rely on government the more they develop a sense of entitlement, which then leads to a nation of ingrates.

Other than all that, big government is terrific. See Greece. Or Puerto Rico. Or Detroit. Not to mention the Soviet Union, North Korea or Mao’s China.

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