

Exactly What IS a Libertarian ?

By Roy Minet (Rev. 11/10/13)

The word “libertarian” is heard increasingly more often these days. Unfortunately, most people have only the fuzzy notion that this is some fringe philosophy. But unlike whatever muddled “philosophies” Republicans and Democrats bother to state, “libertarian” does have a simple, understandable definition.

The libertarian philosophy can be simply stated as, “*Live and let live.*” Each individual must be free to do as s/he pleases as long as s/he does not infringe upon the equal rights of others. This is the central idea of our Declaration of Independence that was baked into the U.S. Constitution by our founding fathers, so it certainly is not some crazy, off-the-wall concept. In fact, an overwhelming majority of Americans agree with “live and let live” and actually are libertarian at heart.

More specifically, “live and let live” means that *force must not be used on an individual, unless that person has initiated the use of force or fraud.* The Libertarian Party calls itself “the party of principal”, and this is the simple but powerful principle from which its positions on all issues are logically and consistently derived.

It is important to recognize that *all laws authorize the government to use force* on people. Laws are enforced, ultimately by escalating to whatever means may become necessary to *force* compliance.

Some of our laws deter and punish those who would initiate the use of force for murder, robbery, assault, etc. These are fine laws entirely consistent with *the legitimate purpose of government, which is to protect and secure our rights.* But unfortunately, most laws just unnecessarily restrict our rights, or even violate our rights, quite the opposite of protecting and securing them. Thus, our governments have become the largest users of oppressive force on people through their unbelievably complex thicket of laws.

In a nut shell, *libertarians want to maximize liberty by eliminating the use of force on peaceful, honest people.* They advocate a peaceful, voluntary society.

By contrast, both Democrats and Republicans love to use force on peaceful people! Democrats primarily like to forcibly confiscate what some people have earned and give it to others who have not earned it (“redistribution”). Republicans, especially conservatives, primarily like to force others to conform to their moral/religious tenets (the so-called “social issues”). However, there is a whole lot of overlap.

Distressingly, no matter what D and R candidates may say to get elected, most *do* the same things once elected. Any principle they may have held is abandoned in favor of doing whatever they can to stay in power. This always involves ignoring the Constitution, passing more laws, expanding government and confiscating more of the wealth produced by the private sector. No wonder the

economy struggles! The ultimate waste of a vote is to vote for either of two candidates that you *know* will continue to do these same destructive things.

Things got way out of hand a few years back when politicians figured out that they could get away with borrowing huge sums so as to postpone the need to raise unpopular taxes. Now, colossal debt mortgages the future of our children.

Unfortunately, the two old parties have gained the power to suppress their competition. Taxpayers are forced to subsidize their conventions and their nominating process (primary elections). Rs and Ds formed the Commission on Presidential Debates to cloak blatant exclusion of their competition with the appearance of legitimacy. In several states, they have even conspired to rig election laws to keep competition off the ballot!

Effectively, we have a one-party system. We should not be restricted to one, two, or any specific number of parties. Competition always drives improvement. Competition among many candidates, ideas and philosophies should be welcomed and encouraged. Strong competition would make it impossible for candidates to survive while ignoring important issues, not answering questions and endlessly repeating meaningless sound bites.

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