

WHAT IS A CONSERVATIVE

I like Chuck Matthews answer from June the Best. He gives an explanation of Personal Conservatism that goes Deep, Dense and Cogent. He's actually elucidating that having a Political Viewpoint is Complicated. But today people throw the words Conservative or Liberal out like they're Madison Ave Ad campaign slogans ... They're NOT.

Here is what he wrote

I consider myself a Conservative. To Me— My brand of Conservatism means a Focus on the Greater Public Good from the perspective of Pragmatic Policy...

Do we, as a Society, Need Something?

Can we Do it?

What will the COST Be?

How do we Pay for it?

That's kind of how I boil down "What is Conservatism" to an essential Cliff Notes short list.

Religion or Evangelicalism is NOT Conservatism. A Government that places Religion at its center or turns to Scripture for legal explanation is a Theocracy, pure and simple. And Logic, Pragmatic Social Policy and Democracy cease to exist when Fundamentalism takes control...because Dissent Becomes Heresy.

Refusal-To-Change really is NOT Conservatism. Conservatism should be able to pragmatically adjust to Deep Social Changes...not attempt to force everyone to pretend that it's still 1950. Or to somehow argue that it's good Conservative Value to enforce on a Black Voting & Tax Paying Populace in a City that they have No power to remove all Civil War Statues that honor Proud Racists. Or to say that Document that was written in the 18th Century, however hallowed, can effectively deal with current Technological and World Economic issues the Original Framers could not even dream of back in the days when traveling to the next town took several days and you didn't need an army because every man had a musket.

Never Raising Taxes and Only Giving Tax Cuts is NOT Conservatism. Conservatism should be able to assess Need and Levy Taxes for the Common Good. Roads, Quality Public Schools, Telecommunications, Public Health Research are easy to argue for on the State or Federal Level. But it gets thornier when Governance gets local and you have counties that want to essentially pay NO TAXES and get Everything Revenue Free because they voted and a Politician 'Promised them so'.

A true Conservative Office Holder would tell constituents when their ‘Wishes’ Do Not Add Up. True Conservative Voters should be able to vote intelligently as Adults, not just wish for things like privileged children who never have to pay for anything. And that includes the mature understanding that not everyone in your Locality is Wealthy...and that the people who are not as Fortunate do not carry the stain or sin of sloth or laziness and thus are Undeserving.

A Real Conservative is NOT a Neo-Calvinist. Calvinism is a twisted version of Protestantism that used to be quietly rampant across this nation in the past. It marries Economic Success to Religion and posits that God only smiles on people who are financially successful. Its modern day variant is called The Prosperity Gospel. This is plainly and simply The Religion of Money. The More Successful you are, the more of God’s Favor shines on you. If you are Poor, it is because of personal Moral Failure. And your poverty and financial misfortune is your just punishment. Which Means that Society should not even be bothered to offer a helping hand or a Safety net. This form of thinking also falls into line with the notion that the Wealthy Have the Right to Rule. As a Conservative, I firmly stand by the assertion that The Wealthy do NOT have ANY RIGHT to Rule.

Unfettered Free Market Capitalism is NOT Conservatism. Old style Conservatism from the days of the Rockefellers had absolutely no problem with Bank or Industry regulation. They saw the Market as an aspect of the Economy that had to be monitored so it didn’t get too overheated or slump into a deep freeze. Go bad in either direction and Society as a whole pay a heavy price. Sensible Polity fails if you just sit back and ‘Let the Market correction run its Course...’ In a technical sense, the Great Depression actually was just ‘A Deep Market Correction that ran its course’. But for Society at Large...it almost Destroyed Us. What Policy Makers Learned from that time was thus: “Markets Do Not Really Care about People; Policy Does.”

A Real Conservative does NOT see Liberals as Voices to be Silenced. A Conservative listens to what a Liberal has to say. (And like Conservatism is Complex and Layered— so too, is Liberalism)

A Liberal may propose a solution, and the Conservative may argue to corral the cost, or limit the scope of a Law or Policy to test against unseen ramifications or unforeseen consequences. Debate goes back and forth and Compromise is reached. Thus does Polity move forward. A functioning Democratic Republic does NOT mean “I Won the election, so you Shut up and Sit Down.”

A Real Conservative is NOT a Libertarian. Not to cast aspersions on Libertarianism is a Philosophy. Just like Conservatism and Liberalism, Libertarianism has many flavors and complexities— but I consider Libertarianism to be too flawed to serve as a central pillar of a functional Polity. (Granted— it’s just my personal opinion! So don’t light your flamethrowers, folks!)

A Lot of the Policy Makers and Politicians who are now in control of various agencies and in Trump’s cabinet are not really Conservatives...but Free Market Libertarians. Ajit Pai with the FCC, Betsy Devos with Education are open examples. The others in Congress, such as the Freedom Caucus and House Speaker Paul Ryan are other examples. If you put aside personal opinions of what these people stand for, their policies fall clearly in the wicket of Free Market Libertarianism: Pull back government interference and let dynamic market forces determine what the Individual Citizens want and need.

Libertarian voices have always been present in Conservative Discourse, but never given free-reign—and possibly with good reason. Just as a real Conservative would argue against a Liberal Single Payer Health Plan Policy expansion on the basis of ballooning cost structures...that same Conservative would argue against a Libertarian Free Market approach to Schooling on the basis of historical evidence of how such an approach neglects poor districts and burdens society with unskilled and unemployable citizens who are dead-ended in poverty. Free Market Libertarians basically argue that the Market will ‘Correct’ the imbalance on its own, and that the reason it never worked before is because it was never given free-reign to succeed. But again— There’s usually a historical reason some ideas are never given ‘Free-Reign’. Sort of like not allowing a child to play with matches in a wood frame house. Yes, if he survives the fire, he will have learned a valuable empirical lesson...but the family is now Homeless!

So, to the Person asking the question “I’m a conservative, but all I see are liberal answers. Why is that?”

When you say you are a Conservative— What does that even mean? Do you even know what Conservatism is?