

OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

Dear OCPA Member:

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Okay, I've had enough -- seems that many free-market types are simply navel-gazing while they whine about the future. Rather than being bold and confident in what we believe, some of us seem intent now on questioning the conservative soul.

Take the idea touted by some high profile conservative "leaders" that "we must move beyond Reagan." When they say that, I guess they want us to move beyond the various influences on Reagan's philosophy too. For instance, his radio commentaries, written in his own hand, demonstrate his familiarity with the work of the Austrian economists F.A. Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. In speeches, he also referred to the thoughts of American historical greats like George Washington and Thomas Paine. Reagan also embraced the ideas of many of his contemporaries like Milton Friedman and Jack Kemp. Question: How can one suggest we move beyond Reagan without also implying that we must abandon the very ideas which the man communicated?

Then there's the "re-branding" thing. I am amused by this concept. It's as if the Republicans really believe that by marketing themselves more like the Democrats they can become more attractive to more voters. This is such a silly concept I'm going to provide an equally silly but perhaps appropriate analogy. Think back to 1985 when Coca-Cola tried to change its formula to emulate the taste of Pepsi. Remember the public outcry? People so trusted the original Coke they resented anyone messing with it. Finally to save face, Coke had to keep the original formula which they named "Coke Classic," alongside their "New Coke" formula which eventually vanished into oblivion. The whole thing lives in marketing infamy as a huge mistake which establishes an important concept. Marketing new formulas is a lousy idea if you have a solid base of loyal followers. Question: How does one "re-brand" the Republican party without compromising conservative principles and therefore losing the base?

Oh yes, then there is the "being lost in the wilderness" thing. Some political pundits must be misreading their compasses. Rather than conservatives being lost in the wilderness, it's really the liberals (or so-called "progressives") who are lost. If government hadn't dictated the terms of the sub-prime loans, the free market would have functioned correctly and people who did not have the financial means to buy a house, wouldn't have. A lot of things could have been different. There has never been the degree of government intervention like we have had the last six months that has led to anything but disastrous consequences. Liberals have the direction of travel all wrong. Question: How can conservatives be lost when we know the right coordinates?

In his 1964 "A Time for Choosing" speech, Ronald Reagan said, "You and I are told we must choose between a left or right, but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down. Up to man's age-old dream--the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order -- or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. . . . The Founding Fathers knew a government can't control the economy without controlling people. And they knew when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. So we have come to a time for choosing."

Until next time . . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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