

OCPA FaxLine Report

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

Dear OCPA Member:

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

It's time to recognize that the battle for America's future is not being waged between Republicans and Democrats, but between "Constitutionalists" and "Progressives." Constitutionalists want boundaries to prevent government from interfering in our citizens' freedom to produce and innovate in the free market system. Progressives, meanwhile, want all boundaries removed from government in order to have the power to restrict and regulate the free market as they determine is best.

The Constitution and its Bill of Rights established the boundary lines which this battle is really all about. Let it be noted, this writer believes there are people from both major political parties which can be found in each camp. That's what is so frustrating about those who want to make this strictly about party politics. It's really about philosophies of governing. Is it "We the People?" or "We the State?" The way you honestly answer this question determines the side you are on. Constitutionalists believe that government should be limited, transparent in all business and accountable to taxpayers. While Progressives believe that government should expand, obfuscate the details and be subsidized for perpetuity.

Progressives' objectives therefore are different than Constitutionalists'. For instance, in spite of the obvious failures of Fannie and Freddie, *in a really warped sense*, they are actually *successes*. At least, that's the way Progressives see them. The idea that public education is broke, or Social Security is broke or Medicare and Medicaid are broke doesn't matter. They aren't *failures*, they're *opportunities*.

Robert Higgs of the Independent Institute and adjunct scholar of the Ludwig von Mises Institute pointed this out in his 1995 article entitled "The Myth of 'Failed' Policies." Higgs' examples are as relevant today. "For decades, commentators of various political persuasions have recognized that our tax-funded welfare system promotes dependency, family dissolution, juvenile delinquency, and other pathologies. Since 1965, an increase of more than five fold (adjusted for inflation) in anti-poverty spending only subsidized the growth of a wretched underclass.

"It would take little more than \$50 billion to raise every poor person above the official poverty line, yet the percentage of the population classified as poor hardly budges, while annual welfare spending amounts to four times that much. Where's the money going?

"You guessed it. The money goes to the planners, researchers, social workers, public health doctors, nurses, and technicians, public housing managers, community organizers, administrators, and assorted apparatchiki . . . these people have strong political connections, vote in every election for candidates who support more welfare spending, and never fail to accuse would-be budget cutters of harming children."

To push their agenda, Progressives market themselves as compassionate protectors of the downtrodden. Rather than solving root problems they end up building huge loyal constituencies for more of the same policies. They equate that as "success."

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

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