

The Independent's Credo

Many of us wished for a viable third party. It has not come to pass in American politics for a very long time. Yet, most Americans express their disenfranchisement from both major parties in the United States. This raises the question as to what is the independent credo? Most people would agree that the last election, and many elections, are swung not necessarily by a strong base but by those "independent voters" that the candidates seem to cultivate in general elections. During the primaries we have the oddity of candidates appealing to the most passionate members of their party, and then turning around and trying to show that they can be everyone's leader. They are appealing to the independents.

The question is, what exactly does an independent believe? Is there such a thing as an independent credo, and could that lead to a third party? The answer is that there is an independent credo but it will not lead to a third party. Political parties are big business. They need to have major funding streams, incumbents who can promote their viability, and a way of turning out voters on election day. I remember one time running a campaign for an independent. I thought we really had a chance, and the polls seemed to support him, until election day. The established political parties knew who had voted and who did not vote. They could make phone calls to those who had not yet voted, send cars to pick them up and turn on the machinery of party politics in a way that no independent could. The parties were tied in to email groups, social media, labor unions, the NRA and other organizations that support the major political parties.

Nevertheless, candidates always recognize that there is such a thing as an "independent" and tend to direct their message accordingly. Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan both were successful in making people believe that their agenda was not narrow but rather was independent. The reality was something different for both men, but they were able to strike the chords that kept the so-called independents on their team.

So, what is this independent credo? Here are some of the major points:

(1) The "Economy Stupid."

The freedom and ability to be able to work at a job that pays fairly commensurate with one's efforts. In other words, put simply, good paying jobs.

(2) Back-off Government.

A government that is not burdensome from a point of view of taxes or personal intrusion. The independent credo is, "Don't tell me what to do or what to think, keep your hands out of my pocketbook, and let me work and raise my family."

(3) Help Me Government.

While I want to have a good paying job, and I am interested in lower taxes and less government, I do not want to be abandoned altogether. Government should provide for national security and defense, and should be available to level the playing field. A government that protects people from dangerous foods and drugs, makes sure that big business does not entirely run America and where upper mobility is encouraged, is the kind of government that most independents want. In other words, there has to be a reasonable balance between a government that does not do enough for its citizens and one that is there to protect and defend people when they need it.

(4) Nice Government.

Help the poor and underprivileged, but do not give them a free ticket if they are lazy or criminal. Everyone wants to see a government that enables people to live decently in their old age, if they do not otherwise have savings, and to be able to obtain health insurance if they need it. On the other hand, the very rich do not need to be protected in the same way and the poor should have to do what they can to deserve taxpayer money paid by other citizens. All entitlements should be based upon genuine need and legitimacy. Americans are very generous people, and no one is upset about helping someone who needs help. People do get angry when the system is abused, whether by the very rich or the very poor.

(5) Befriend Our Allies Not Our Enemies.

Internationally, help our friends, who help us, and turn a blind eye to our enemies who seek our destruction. Do not get involved in unnecessary wars, but be strong enough to fight when it is in our national self-interest.

All of this sounds pretty good, but the devil is in the details. What about issues like abortion, gender equality and gay rights? How about transgender rights? Americans are fair-minded people and want a level playing field. They typically do not care how people live or what they do, so long as they do not bother other people. Abortion is an issue that will not go away easily. Protection of life, even in the womb, speaks loudly to most Americans. On the other hand, free choice in the first trimester, is a concept that the majority of Americans believe in. Achieving a balance will be very difficult. A person can be an independent and take either one of these points of view. Is a compromise possible? In other countries abortion is banned after the first trimester, and during the first trimester there must be some medical determination that an abortion is necessary for the health of the mother. Most Americans who are pro-choice would oppose such a compromise. Naturally, those who believe that life deserves to be protected from the time of conception will also disagree.

Gender rights, gay rights, are issues that gets a lot of public attention. Most Americans are past fighting over this and believe that regardless of a person's gender determination, they should be treated fairly, with equality, so long as they work hard and do not impose themselves or their views on others.

The truly independent thinker realizes that a \$20 trillion debt, during relatively good times, simply will not work. Our society will be ground under and fail unless we live within our means, unless there is some extraordinary reason why we need to ignore budgetary constraints. This means that we have to do something major about our spending and taxation. The independent thinker realizes that everyone should pay something towards taxes. People like Ross Perot, who once bragged that he paid no taxes because his income came from municipal bonds, just is not right to the independent thinker. Likewise paying billions and billions of dollars for needless military equipment or other wasteful, unnecessary projects is unacceptable to the independent thinker.

Interestingly, the Simpson-Bowles bipartisan compromise to our budget deficit and spending was rejected by both political parties. That probably means it was pretty good. It would have inflicted pain on those who advocate spending and it would have raised taxes on those diametrically opposed to such an approach.

If our politicians truly respect independents, as they claim they do, they will begin to focus more on the boring moderate.

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