



Business and Conservatism

Although my friend has stated more than one reason for his support of both men, our discussions made it obvious that it was the astute *business acumen* of Trump and Romney more than any other consideration that endeared them to him.

Unfortunately, the view that success in business promises to translate into success in politics dies hard among Republicans.

Ironically, to as great an extent as anything else, Trump and Romney — stupendously successful businessmen who are also Republicans — amply illustrate the fallaciousness of this idea, for no one with a modicum of seriousness would think to characterize either as a conservative or even a *classical* liberal.



Trump has made [contributions to the war chests of Democrats comparable to those that he has made to the coffers of Republicans](#); [sympathizes with labor monopolies \(euphemistically called “unions”\)](#); and thinks nothing of [colluding with government to confiscate](#) the legally acquired holdings of others when it suits his purposes to do so (“*eminent domain*”). That Romney succeeded in becoming Governor of the most left-wing state in the country should alone suffice to establish that he is anything but a conservative. But in addition to this, he has endorsed “abortion right” (even if he began [singing a different tune](#) when it became politically expedient for him to do so) and, much more importantly, [imposed upon the citizens of his state a healthcare plan](#) that both Republicans and Democrats view as something like a precursor to the ominous “ObamaCare.”

There are more general reasons that undercut the identification of business fortunes with political fortunes.

A business is an *enterprise*. Any enterprise is defined by its goals. A business enterprise is distinguished by the goal of *profit*. In order to achieve this goal, a business first needs *managers* and employees or laborers who, along with the managers, are *joint-enterprisers* of a sort — but only of a sort. After all, managers and employees are not equals. Managers exist for the sake of *directing* or *supervising* the engagements of their employees in the service of realizing the goal of profit.

The last thing conservatives, libertarians, or constitutionalists should want are politicians who view politics in terms of business. It has always been leftists, particularly communists and socialists, who longed to structure the state along the lines of a finely managed industry. Conversely, conservatives and others on the Right have traditionally abhorred such a model.

Of course, that a person with political aspirations has business experience doesn't necessarily mean that he will regard the state as but another business venture for him to tackle. But when someone has spent most of his life conquering the world in business, there is the real possibility that he will have a



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difficult time not seeing the rest of life, and especially politics, through those experiences.

The civil association delineated by the United States Constitution is *not* an enterprise. The government that it defines does not consist of managers or “leaders,” and its associates are not joint-enterprisers, for there is no goal toward which their efforts are to be directed. The Constitution specifies, not actions for the associates of the civil association to perform, but laws for them to observe while pursuing the actions of their own choosing. And the representatives of the associates in a civil association are not managers or leaders, but *governors*: their function is to govern.

Contrast this with business. In a business, each individual is *assigned* a role. That is, each member of the business is expected to engage in only those courses of action that are instrumental toward the realization of the end for the sake of which the business exists: specifically, the end of profit.

There is still another reason why no one should confuse a businessman with a conservative.

Even though conservatives have always found “capitalism” or a system of “free enterprise” preferable to all other alternatives, they have nonetheless shared with leftists the insight that with its intrinsic propensity to produce rapid change, such a system poses a greater potential threat to tradition than any other. Insofar as he is a “capitalist,” the successful businessperson on the order of a Romney or Trump need have no allegiances to rival his commitment to maximize profit.

Trump, for example, although he identifies himself as a Republican and a conservative, has admitted to providing monetary support to legions of Democrats, not, supposedly, because he shared their beliefs, but because it was the cost of doing business in New York City and other locations. And Trump’s appropriation of “eminent domain” to dislocate people from their homes and upset local communities is another illustration of how the “capitalist’s” singular focus on profit can blind him to the significance of those “little platoons,” as Burke described them, those local, concrete attachments that invest the individual’s life with identity and purpose and which function as buffers between the citizen and his government.

We would be well served to remember all of this the next time someone attempts to persuade us that Romney would make a good President because he is a good businessman.



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