



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on January 8, 2009

Ready to Be an Extremist Again

If you are a conservative, conventional thinking goes, you can't criticize a Republican president. The worst a conservative is supposed to do is to grumble about how a Republican president is not conservative enough, and then note that at least he's better than the alternative. But I wasn't buying the party line.

Bush did more to erode the restraints of the U.S. Constitution than any president who preceded him, with direct attacks on the Bill of Rights' prohibitions on detainment without *habeas corpus* or trial, torture, and searches without a court warrant. He presided over Republican and Democratic Congresses that enacted the largest spending increases since FDR, and will leave office with the largest budget deficit in U.S. history. He made no effort to stop the spending madness that has ruined our economy, and did much to worsen it. He also left us embroiled in two disastrous foreign wars that killed far more Americans than September 11, and there's no end in sight.

There's absolutely no evidence he was better than the alternative. For pointing out these indisputable facts, I was called a "middle-of-the-roader," a libertarian, and even a liberal a couple of times.

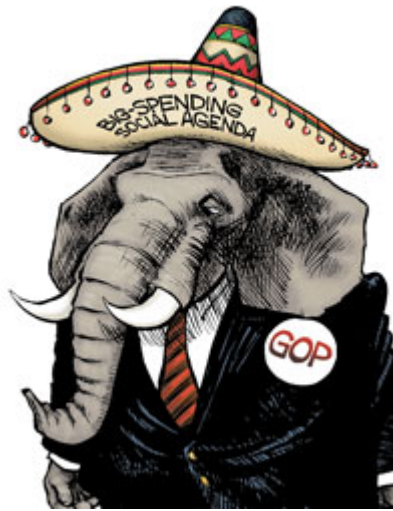
I hadn't changed my views from when I had criticized the Clinton administration's big-government policies. Criticizing Clinton's big-government policies got me labeled a "right-wing extremist." I'm not a right-wing extremist, of course, but rather I'm a moderate, middle-of-the-road John Bircher who believes in limited government under the U.S. Constitution.

Later, when I criticized the Bush administration's even-bigger-government policies, I magically became a "middle-of-the-roader" or a "moderate" for saying exactly the same thing that got me labeled a "right-wing extremist."

If a war of aggression by Clinton against Bosnia was wrong (as is any attack on a country that hasn't attacked the United States), I would suggest, then the war of aggression against Iraq under Bush is also wrong. Deficit spending under Bush was as wrong as the likely deficit spending under Obama will be.

I hadn't moved; the labelers had moved. Like the weather changing with the seasons, these terms changed meaning with the party in power at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

It just goes to show what terms like left, right, center, conservative, and liberal mean today.





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THE CHANGE IT NEEDS....



They mean nothing.

Left, right, and center mean nothing if you set out on a 1,000-mile journey without a map or directions. Left compared to what? You don't even know where you are.

Likewise, conservative means nothing if you have no fixed idea of what it is you'd like to conserve. Liberal means nothing unless you have some concrete idea of what should be liberalized. That's the problem with the labelers. They have no fixed frame of reference, which is to say that they have no idea what the Constitution requires and what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they set up our government. Instead, Americans rely upon the politicians and the establishment media to frame these terms in a self-serving manner. And many people never realize they've been hoodwinked into a false dichotomy.

Rome went through the same sickening cycle at the end of its republic, when Romans fretted more over whether they were with the party of Caesar or the party of Pompey rather than whether their freedoms were eroding under both administrations.

Americans, like Romans of old, are seeking a knight on a white horse to save their freedom. But we won't be saved by a president, Democrat or Republican. We can only save ourselves. Freedom can only be restored by bringing the size and scope of government back into check by putting sufficient pressure on the legislature. If we're to preserve freedom, it'll be when citizens insist that their Congress make government smaller.

As big-government Democrat Barack Obama takes the reins (or perhaps I should say "dons the purple") as president, I can again expect to be labeled a right-wing extremist. New label, same guy. Or old label, same guy. It's hard to keep track.

So be it.

I can handle the labels. I can stay consistent.

Besides, it's fun to ask the labelers, "Right-wing compared to what objective standard of measurement?" I almost always get a puzzled, vacant expression in return.

Thomas R. Eddlem, a freelance writer, served as the John Birch Society's director of research from 1991-2000.



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