



More “Conservative” Blindness

In his most recent piece, the widely respected Thomas Sowell refers to the GOP as “the 8th wonder of the world” for its uncanny ability to continue “repeating the same mistakes for decades on end.” The Republican establishment, Sowell complains, persists in nominating “ad hoc moderates” — like Mitt Romney — as their presidential candidates — even though these moderates unfailingly “get beaten by even vulnerable, unknown or discredited Democrats.”

This, Sowell thinks, is because these “pragmatic moderates ... feed pablum to the public, instead of treating them like adults.” When it comes to conveying a “coherent argument, instead of ad hoc talking points,” Republican politicians generally fail abysmally.



Given the admiration that I always had for Sowell, it pains me to confess that his analysis — which has been echoed by many others in “the conservative media”— reveals the depths of the mess in which the mainstream right is mired.

In other words, it is Sowell’s mentality that accounts for why Republicans are “the 8th wonder of the world.”

When Sowell decries “ad hoc moderates” he means to refer to “Republican-In-Name-Only” (RINO) types. That is, it is Republican liberals for whom he reserves his disdain. And when he criticizes their penchant for “ad hoc talking points,” as opposed to “coherent argument,” it is their inability or unwillingness to explain to voters the rational and moral superiority of their positions to which he speaks.

There is more than one problem with this reasoning, but the one problem that is most glaring — and most serious — is the assumption that lies at its heart. It is the assumption that there really is a meaningful distinction to be drawn between Republicans who are “moderates” and those who are not.

Sowell lambasts Mitt Romney for being an “ad hoc moderate,” but during the presidential primaries he endorsed Newt Gingrich. How, we must ask, is the latter any less a “moderate” than the former? If anything, from their respective stances on immigration to foreign policy to Big Government generally, the case can be made that Gingrich is actually more of a so-called “moderate” — i.e. liberal — than Romney.

And what is true of Gingrich is no less true of Rick Santorum, Herman Cain, Rick Perry, Chris Christie, and virtually every other Republican who is widely heralded as a “star” of “the conservative movement.”

Most tellingly of all is that it is also true of the god of the movement, Ronald W. Reagan. If a “moderate” is a Republican liberal, and the latter is but a champion of what I have elsewhere called Gargantuan



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on January 2, 2013

Government, then, in practice, even if not in rhetoric, Reagan was as much of such a champ as anyone. The federal government continued to grow and grow and grow during Reagan's two terms in office. He succeeded in eliminating not a single government program, let alone an agency. Taxes were cut in his first year as president, yes, but they were increased many times after that. Spending far exceeded even Jimmy Carter's wildest forecast, we "cut and run" after more than 200 of our Marines were killed in Lebanon, and millions of illegal immigrants were granted amnesty — all under Reagan's watch.

Neither Sowell nor most people would say that Gingrich was inarticulate — and no one, at least nowadays, would say anything of the sort about Reagan. For that matter, neither is Romney, Santorum, nor any number of other Republican "moderates" incapable of talking a good talk.

But in the end, their feet failed, as they always fail, to synchronize with their lips.

Can it be, not that Republicans fail to convey their message, but that they fail to implement it when they have the chance to do so? Can it be that they have ruined their credibility because their walk never meshes with their talk?

It is true that Republicans have a more difficult time making inroads with the American public given that much of the media remains under the control of Democratic sympathizers. Yet it never seems to dawn upon Republican politicians and commentators that they have made their rivals' work that much easier by repeatedly professing their commitment to ideals that are conspicuously remote from the real world, ideals that they never come near to fleshing out.

For example, Republicans go on and on about "limited government" and "lower taxes," say, but everywhere Americans look, all that they experience are burdensome taxes and an omnipresent government. Such is the case whether Republicans are in or out of power.

Republicans, in short, all too easily come across as insincere. They can even be seen as more, not less, power-hungry than Democrats because of this.

Until Sowell and others on the right understand that conservatives' ticket to winning future elections is to make sure that they are, well, conservative, Republicans will continue "repeating the same mistakes" for more "decades on end."



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