

The Nearly Forgotten Libertarians

Shôn Ellerton, September 21, 2020

A fresh breakaway from the Republicans and the Democrats? Or just a pipe dream.



Libertarianism, the word that stokes up so many different meanings depending on who you discuss it with.

For me, it conjures up the grand principles embodied in the Constitution of the United States to grow the original thirteen colonies to a federation of states, each of which has the power to govern the daily lives of its people, but not so much as to dictate how people live their lives. Libertarianism, to me is what makes the Bill of Rights one of the most edifying and liberating pieces of workmanship beset by any pen in the history of modern man. Libertarianism, to me, represents the most practical way to keep governments as small as possible and more importantly, to prevent overreach of governmental powers to manipulate the economy, curtail individual freedoms and meddle extensively with international affairs. In short, libertarianism sums up nicely in one phrase. ‘Mind your own effing business!’

For some, libertarianism is a ‘dead duck’ being antiquated and not fit for purpose in today’s multicultural and globalised society. The *laissez-faire* approach to a free market society along with minimal government intervention yanks any form of ‘safety net’ for those who are deemed to be disadvantaged. The reliance on private investment to run the nation’s public transportation, medical services, road networks, schools, and other services such as the post office is a threat to equality, accessibility and a foundation of a common standard. In its extreme guise, libertarianism is a gateway to anarchy, in the true meaning of its word. Self-governing. Not of riots and disorder.

And for others, they define libertarianism as portrayed through social media circles or what they view as reality ‘on the tube [the TV]’, to quote the 1976 movie [Network](#), a movie oddly in sync with what is happening with today’s news. Fat white Midwest Americans with beards sporting guns around their waists. Anti-vaxxers that attempt to pollute science with their unorthodox views of the dangers of vaccines. Selfish people in crowded areas refusing to put their masks on. Worst of all, are those who equate libertarianism with white supremacy, which is so utterly ridiculous, it defies belief. Sadly, our social media tech giants tend not to be keen in upholding the virtues of libertarianism but rather, to *oppose* them for the sake of the prevention of dissemination of knowledge which they deem to be unsafe for public consumption.

Each of the above three viewpoints have their own set of truths and untruths.

Why libertarianism?

There are three reasons as to why I have written an article about libertarianism, or more specifically, why I have a problem with today’s Republicans and Democrats.

Core Values

First, I believe libertarianism is something that has been largely forgotten about in the mindset of so many of today’s American minds. I do not know what is taught today at elementary schools across the United States; but when I was in fourth grade (ages 9-11) at a state school during the early 1980s in the state of Colorado, American history was considered a very important subject. We were taught that history is there to remind us where our values and freedom came from. The unsavoury elements of history were also taught to show us what mistakes were made and how we could avoid them in the future. I have vivid memories of freshly-minted, blue-inked mimeographed worksheets—which many, being kids, during those days remembered the smell of—with loads of essay-type questions relating to the history of the United States. American history, contrary to what many Europeans would have you believe, is rich and interesting despite its relatively short history.

Bear in mind that this was the early 80s, the last phase of the Cold War between the unfree communist nations and the much freer western democracies. The Cold War, as bad as it was for those living in communist nations, or more

effectively, being open prisons, had a magnificent silver lining in that those living in the 'West' enjoyed liberty and freedom and truly valued it. In short, we were proud to be Americans. We were patriotic and celebrated the American flag. However, the Cold War had died out as well as the threat of a communist takeover leaving a diaspora of middle east theocracies, an obviously overfed dictator from the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and the odd terrorist activity, the most famous being the removal of two very tall buildings followed by a series of gruesome livestreamed beheadings by extremist movements being the only existential threats left. The younger generations being taught today have no living memory of any part of the Cold War. Likewise, I have no living memory of the threats posed by Axis powers during World War II. Roll on to the 2000s, and we started to look inward amplifying our own domestic problems whether it be social, financial, or environmental. Basically, things have been, perhaps, a little too good, so we must make small issues into big issues. Check out the [blue dot experiment](#), which makes out that humans can never be happy and always needs something to complain about.

Patriotism was high on the agenda during the time I was in school. Each morning, the whole class had to stand up and pledge allegiance to the flag, and to this day, the words are indelibly etched in my head. Patriotism is a vital component of being successful as a nation. Without it, there is a void in the social structure. However, many would disagree with this notion, particularly those who sit in the extreme left and right side of politics, libertarian or authoritarian. For example, mention the word, patriotism, in the UK, and I guarantee that much of the population will automatically conjure up images of white supremacy and Tommy Robinson. I get quite disturbed when activists on home soil, most of which have probably never travelled away from home, trounce up and down the streets burning the flag and chanting 'Death to America!', an activity more likely to see on the news in countries like North Korea or Iran. Whether today's America will become so heavily polarised up to the point that a civil war may erupt is guesswork, but it is a possible outcome and not a far-flung fantasy. It is a scary prospect and, like most revolutions in world history, the resulting leadership is usually autocratic.

The power of voting was instilled at a very early age in American schools. School field trips were generally great days out, the best ones I can remember from my schooldays in Colorado Springs being visits to the Pueblo steelworks, the Denver Mint, Sinton's Dairy Farm and the Mining Museum. But we also

had a field trip to, what many would consider as a very boring day out, to a county municipal building in downtown Colorado Springs, where people come to vote. We clambered on one of those yellow school buses and had a great day out being enchanted, a surprising feat considering the subject matter, on the merits and privilege of being able to vote and the rightful duty to do so.

Moreover, we were instilled with a sense of power and pride that, one day, we would be old enough to vote. We even had a mock voting session where we were armed with a pencil and a ballot and led to a booth to 'vote'. I voted for John Anderson, an independent, instead of either Carter or Reagan. His policies, unlike Reagan's or Carter's, seemed to make sense to me, which is, somewhat extraordinary, considering I was around ten years of age.

I also remember how ethnically diverse our class was as well and how equally everyone was treated regardless of race, colour, or creed. Religion was not discussed and certainly not gender, although we had to undergo a little sex education during fifth grade if I remembered correctly, but purely in a biological birds-and-the-bees way. But what I remember most of all, is that there is the freedom to pursue what you want to be and that no one can prevent you from doing so. This does not mean that everyone gets the same head start. Far from it. Even as kids, we understood that to be an impractical notion, at least, I did. All kids know that there are some who have more and some who have less.

There are some readers who might take my experience as a fourth grader to be grossly outdated and to be one of the leading causes to all the trouble and strife we are experiencing today economically and socially. However, there are many who value these types of experiences to be at the heart of a fully functioning and free society. I am worried that these values and experiences are not being reflected in today's education. I am worried that today's children are not in a position to think for themselves. I am worried that today's children are not taught the basic tenets of patriotism and good citizenry. The biggest crime in some of today's education is indoctrinating our youth with guilt and hatred of the country in which they are a part of. This is repugnant and destructive.

Not Liking Either the Republicans or the Democrats

The second reason I am writing about libertarianism is based on my dislike in choosing between today's Republicans and Democrats notwithstanding, quite possibly, the worst pair of candidates in US history for the presidency. As for

the Republican and Democratic parties, they have racked up *between* them an astonishing 26 trillion dollars of debt. Regardless of what party was in power at the time, the debt has been rising continuously from 2005 and sharply increased since 2009 up to the present. To add insult to injury, both parties and their supporters make every effort to blame each other for the rising debt by selecting specific cases depending on who, at the time, was in power.

Both Republicans and Democrats have been guilty in bloating up the size of government to extravagant proportions. Both parties have been implicit in extending the powers of the executive branch, especially during times of crisis when extraordinary emergency powers, meant to be temporary, are put into place. Both parties have extensively meddled with international affairs playing the world's global policeman, a mindset started with the Truman Doctrine of 1947. In the case of extraordinary powers, the horrific but oddly 'convenient' events of 9/11 and COVID have made public acceptance of enacting these powers more palatable, especially in those countries which do not have the protection of a Bill of Rights, a document which should be the envy to all in the world who crave individual liberty within the boundaries of common law. For example, since COVID, Australia, France, Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom have managed to pass some of the most un-libertarian of measures to control their people, and I opine that it has been met with little or no success to control the crisis. Alarmingly, there are many who agree with some of these draconian measures, such as what is currently taking place in Dan Andrew's Victoria, an extraordinary example of what I can only relate to as left-wing fascism. Such an example is the tell-tale sign of the [Stockholm Syndrome](#), the scenario where a hostage develops positive feelings with their captors.

Today's Democrats and Republicans are against what libertarianism represents. Small government, little interference in foreign and domestic affairs, neutrality, the freedom to do what you like as long as it does not harm anybody else and the freedom to think and express openly without fear of repercussions. Again, the Republican and Democrat parties have *both* been guilty of gross interference and infringement of civil liberties so highly valued in the American mindset. In my childhood during the 80s, Republican-led states generally condemned free speech related to non-Christian or atheist beliefs, gay marriage, deregulation of marijuana, and, of course, communism. Those that suffered through AIDS must have had it tough during these years. I remember when *Monty Python's Life of Brian* was released in cinemas and the many attempts by religious lobbies and

primarily, conservative-leaning political parties to ban it. Now the tables are turned in a different way today. Democrat-leaning states, organisations and individuals are leading the way into ‘cancel culture’, implicitly forcing compliance on their citizens to accept the ideologies of unwholesome movements against reason and logic, and the silencing of those who voice counterarguments against so-called accepted narratives of the day, whether it be social, political or medical related. Allow me to add a caveat that, by no means, not all Democrats have this mindset. And the same goes for the Republicans. For example, Trump recently tried to block WeChat services in the United States, a violation of the first amendment which the courts thankfully defended resulting in the continuation of allowing WeChat to be unblocked.

It’s a funny thought that, once upon a time, government *was* small and far more approachable in the United States in its earlier years. In one of Bill Bryson’s books, Bryson mentioned that it was not uncommon for ordinary members of the public to, sort of, wander into the White House brushing shoulders with the president. It is unthinkable of that ever occurring again. The White House is protected far more heavily than the Royal palaces of Britain, which is ironic, considering that the United States was founded on totally opposite principles of the monarchy in England at the time.

There is an Alternative

The final reason I write about libertarianism is because there is a third choice for those who are disenfranchised with the concept of voting for today’s Republican and Democrat parties. Very few people living in the United States have heard of the third-party candidate, Jo Jorgensen, who is running for the Libertarian party. Even fewer *outside* the United States have any idea that a third party exists at all. I find this quite staggering. The world’s most powerful nation and yet, being reduced to, effectively, two not particularly inspiring and, frankly, inappropriate candidates. This, of course, is not helped by the fact that mainstream news barely mentions any candidate other than that of Trump or Biden. To be honest, I vaguely heard of Jo Jorgensen and her running mate, Jeremy ‘Spike’ Cohen, not too long ago and only recently did I listen in on one of their rallies.

Watching a Jo Jorgensen rally is, at the same time, refreshing but somewhat melancholic. Refreshing insofar that a new start to the country embracing libertarian values, not unlike those values of which the country was founded,

could be had again. The prospect of not having a Royal House of Trump or a People's Republic of Biden is an alluring one from my standpoint. Ordinary but capable people in power who have not gained access to the presidency through vast amounts of money or stardom. The stripping of over-bloated government to an agile, more manageable one—the same principle could be applied to some of today's software! Letting the free market dictate the running services which are government-controlled, for example, healthcare, education, and other public services. Libertarians claim that this principle will *reduce* the price of services and commodities, although, I am not personally convinced this is the right solution for all of them.

The people who attended the rally came from all backgrounds with quite a large proportion of those being of minority groups. They were not overbearing gun-toting bearded pot-bellied men as many might perceive them to be because they support the liberty of toting a gun and not having to be forced to wear a mask. They looked like to be normal down-to-earth people who are clearly fed up with the inadequacies of American leadership for the last few decades. Unlike the rallies of Trump or Biden, a wide variety of quite probing questions were directly asked by members of the audience to the candidates. For example, how would the Libertarian party protect the United States from foreign interference? How would the rights of the LBGTIQ community be upheld? How would standards of education be achieved with the abolishment of the Department of Education? And what of healthcare and the price of drugs? All these questions were asked and answered convincingly well by the candidates.

The rally was also a little bit melancholic because the energy which only a big crowd could muster was simply not there. It was through no fault of the candidates or the supporters that were there, but because of the inability to draw a large enough crowd to have that electric atmosphere. The rally comprised, essentially, of a few dozen supporters, a turquoise-coloured bus with the name of Jo Jorgensen emblazoned on it sitting in a field along with a podium surrounded by a lot of lawn chairs. During the whole time, the continuous whirring sound of a diesel generator providing the electrical power disconcertingly filled any of the silence. It wasn't really a rally as much as a travelling roadshow. Major news networks seldom covered any footage leaving it only to local news or those with their own video cameras and YouTube accounts to convey the message to the paltry few who come across it in their social media feeds. It is a bit of a tragedy really. After all. Here is a well-

educated female presidential candidate whose policies would, in my opinion, be a star hit with a vast swathe of the population if she had more exposure to the masses. But alas, it is not to be and sadly without being pessimistic, I do not believe we will ever see a third-party knock either the Republicans or Democrats off their pedestals in my lifetime.

To conclude

I do hold reservations whether a Libertarian party would be successful in leading the country. Has the United States and its government grown so complex and large within an ever-increasing global society as to make the whole concept of libertarianism impractical? Jo Jorgensen frequently makes the analogy of making '*one giant Switzerland but armed*' but Switzerland, to my mind, does not reflect much in the way of a libertarian society bar the fact that it is a neutral nation. Can the United States ever become a neutral nation? Can a free market society without government intervention exist? What does the very definition of a libertarian mean? Liberty for all in the context of freedom or the liberty for one to do something without interference from a higher authority? One could arguably say that, during the 18th century, one enjoyed the liberty of keeping slaves; however, for the slaves, they did not enjoy the liberty of freedom. Libertarianism has its own set of issues and it primarily depends on whether one takes a left approach or a right approach. For example, an ultra-right libertarian approach not unlike Ayn Rand's philosophy, where no government intervenes in the free market usually results in an exceptionally large disparity between the rich and the poor. Such an example could be reflected in Hong Kong, although that could possibly change with the current events taking place in today with China. Ultimately, it is important to strike the right balance of libertarianism, but it is complex as is most politics.

The libertarians, should they win—which they won't--would not find it an easy task to make the transition from decades of Republican and Democrat governments, but the big question is this. If, hypothetically, there was an equal chance of the Republicans, Democrats or Libertarians winning the election. Who would you choose as the next party?