



Liberals and conservatives can agree

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I'm feeling bad for my country. Everyone is snarling. Is this the "domestic tranquility" we want? Are we pursuing happiness yet? No, liberals and conservatives are at each other's throats.

That is why I was pleased to find myself in agreement with my friend and Right Stuff contributor Erin Easter's recent column. Well, much of it anyway. Can we all get along? Maybe.

Erin laments the disappearance of vocational education locally. Wow, I agree.

She laments the disappearance of the county Regional Occupational Program. Decades ago Solano County hosted more than 40 different certificate programs to prepare young people for skilled and semi-skilled work.

Off the top of my head I can especially recall a two-year program for refrigeration and heating from which almost no one graduated because they were hired away so quickly. I remember phlebotomy which could get you a certificate for less than \$500. Today the same course will cost you upwards of \$15,000 at a for-profit college. Ah, capitalism!

Only one adult class is left (para-education). The program ran out of money in one of our budget cuts. Too often, education is seen as an expense rather than an investment. Sad.

So Erin's son has to travel to Pleasant Hill, as vocation education has pretty much moved into the community colleges.

OK, there were a few points of disagreement in Erin's column. She apparently attended a speech by economist Stephen Moore. Uh-oh, I thought to myself. I recalled that Moore is associated with the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, Dick Arme of "kill Social Security" fame, and other conservative rogues. He authored the Fair Tax proposal, which you might guess wasn't very fair. It called for a 23 percent national sales tax and abolition of all other taxes including repeal of the 16th Amendment (the income tax).

And sure enough, we were treated to standard Republican economic orthodoxy. Moore is correct to lament slow economic growth at 1.5 percent per year. The remedy? Tax cuts!

Ah, the ghost of Reagan soldiers on. We've proven that tax cuts don't work. It was the reduction of interest rates (and inflation), that revived the economy under Reagan, according to the

Reaganaut who was the architect of his tax cut. George Bush cut taxes more than Reagan with no results.

No, what will get our economy going is higher demand, and that means more income for hourly and yearly workers. You see, wages and salaries have flat-lined for 30 years so the economy has sputtered. We all want more jobs, but you won't add jobs if there is no higher demand. But under Republican ascendancy, unions have been hammered and salaries have stagnated.

Moore wants 3 percent growth. That's politics, not economics. Sadly, we can't grow for any sustained period at 3 percent – we're way too big. We'd be fine with sustained growth at 2 percent or 2.5 percent.

Nearby example. Does anyone remember the year in the 1970s when Suisun was dubbed “the fastest growing little city in California”? Here's why. Say Suisun had 1,000 houses and a builder built 500 homes. That's 50 percent growth! Wow! A wizard, that Mayor Sanchez!

Let's also say that Fairfield added 500 houses in the same year, but its existing housing stock had been 20,000 (a realistic guess). That represents 2.5 percent growth. Why, “The city has failed! Throw da bums out!” Get it?

So when you hear a Republican exclaim that his proposals will “get this county going again” at 3 percent or 4 percent growth, remember, his lips are moving. It's impossible.

Speaking of moving lips, it was the Kansas City Star that once refused to publish anything Moore said because of “his continued history of stating falsehoods.”

I hope I didn't make anyone snarl.