

## [Making Sense with Nicholls](#)

**Saturday, August 01, 2009**

### [A Liberal takes me to task and makes good points](#)

A few days ago I posted [my views](#) on the Cato Institute's Will Wilkerson's idea that libertarians should seek some sort of fusion with liberals.

In the process I made a few cracks about the Liberal Party, comments which Ron McKinnon a former Liberal candidate and current president of the Port Moody – Westwood – Port Coquitlam Federal Liberal Association took exception to.

He wrote a thoughtful letter to give his side of the story and made some interesting points. I asked his permission to reprint the letter and he agreed. (Please note - his comments contain no personal attacks or insults, no profanity and no knee-kerk partisan responses. I found it quite refreshing.)

Here it is:

In his opinion "Can libertarians and liberals learn to be friends?" (July 27, 2009) Gerry Nicholls discusses Cato Institute Will Wilkinson's argument for Libertarians to seek alignment with left-wing-liberals.

An odd juxtaposition to be sure, but Mr Nicholls sprinkles his discussion with a number of contentious asides, of which I address three:

1. "Besides the fact that liberals just don't like capitalism ..."
2. "The best way to convince the Liberals to adopt a pro-freedom agenda ..."
3. "... Tories, the more natural allies of freedom."

These comments suggest a striking misunderstanding of liberalism, yea even Liberalism, for which freedom of the individual is a fundamental tenet.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, et al, liberalism is "... a political and economic doctrine that emphasizes the rights and freedoms of the individual and the need to limit the powers of government."

More particularly, the constitution of the Liberal Party of Canada itself affirms that the Party "... is dedicated to the principles that have historically sustained the Party: individual freedom, responsibility and human dignity in the framework of a just society, and political freedom in the framework of meaningful participation by all persons."

It is hard to see where Liberals need in any way to be convinced to adopt a pro-freedom

agenda, nor that freedom has any more-natural allies.

From freedom of the individual flows the right for an individual to own his/her labour and the product of such labour, and the right to give or exchange these with others in non-coercive transactions.

Free markets and capitalism itself follow from this. Hence it is similarly hard for me to reconcile the general notion that followers of such a philosophy dedicated to freedom "...just don't like capitalism."

On this point, however, while I contend that Mr Nicholls errs in the general case, I will grant some truth as regards some of our more extreme 'left-leaning' friends: while celebrating the right of an individual to own his/her own labour and the product of their own labour, they do seem to lose track of this by the time such value accrues and is used to capitalize ventures that create profit (even while arguably creating employment and opportunity for others, as well). I find this odd, too, but the crux of the matter is that even rights that we fully recognize are not necessarily unfettered.

Living in a society of free persons means that our individual freedoms must by times be bounded such as to also give meaning to the rights of those other persons. That's where it gets difficult, and that's where it gets really interesting.

That's where we have to find and strike a balance. Such balance will vary of course from person to person according to their individual circumstances, values, understanding and experience.

And reasonable people do sometimes differ, wherein arises our great political conversation that will dwell long into the future.

Ron McKinnon  
Port Coquitlam