

"Bumper stickers and silos"

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For different reasons and in different ways, both the Democrats and Republicans are missing something. Both are convinced their own world view is superior, both are slaves to special interests, and both seem oblivious to the fact that most people embrace elements of both world views.

ALTOONA, WI - I'm not one of those who thinks you can't tell apart the two major political parties in America. I don't buy for a second that they are two wings of the same bird.

Today's Republicans and Democrats have very real and very substantial differences. But both parties have been corrupted and each is failing the country in its own way.

On the surface, Republicans and Democrats talk and act differently. Their words and actions differ so much because below ground their core values conflict and they don't see eye to eye on how the world works.

Republicans concentrate on the individual. They emphasize self-reliance. Successful people are self-made. Achievement comes from discipline and individual initiative. Failure is the fault of individual weakness or lack of effort, not a scarcity of opportunity or the absence of social justice.

Democrats focus on the community. They stress how interdependent we are. Those who succeed stand on the shoulders of countless others. Advancement depends on many helping hands. Creating opportunity for one — and helping up those who fall — is the responsibility of all.

For at least the last 30 or 40 years, just about every step Republicans take and every move they make has been justified on the grounds of four core principles that fit comfortably on a bumper sticker. **Less government. Lower taxes. Individual liberty. Safety and security through strength**

Of course, today's Republicans have an infidelity problem. There's the dirty little secret that the biggest expansion of the federal government in the last half-century was largely the [GOP's doing](#). And it's the [richest](#) who enjoy the lowest tax rates. Republicans used to be for local control but aren't anymore. They [no longer act on the belief](#) that the best government is the one closest to the people.

Your average Democrat, on the other hand, does not summon an overarching principle or core value when explaining a stance or justifying an action. Democrats prefer facts, and have large collections of them. Problem is, when facts and values collide, most people will discard the facts and hold on tight to their values.

The Democratic Party is an amalgamation of a dizzying array of issues and causes and constituencies, the sum total of which does not add up to a governing majority in most parts of the country. Think of the group behavior of Democrats and you are reminded more of cats or rabbits than bees or geese. There's even a metaphor commonly used to describe this trait that runs particularly strong in Democrats. They are said to each be in their own issue silo.

Having grown up on a farm, I can say from personal observation that silos are no fit place to live. They are cramped and cold and dirty. They work well for storing feed for cattle, not so well for storing the hopes and dreams of Democrats.

For different reasons and in different ways, both the Democrats and Republicans are missing something. Both are convinced their own world view is superior, and both seem oblivious to the fact that most people embrace elements of both world views. Most people put great value on discipline and personal responsibility, but also see the importance of lending a helping hand and

making sure that everyone gets a fair shake. Few love paying taxes, but most see the sense of pooling our money to pay to do those things that need to be done together.

The future belongs to the party that figures out that, philosophically speaking, we're mutts not purebreds. And reconciles itself to the unpleasant fact that we see how both parties are slaves to special interests. They favor different constituencies, but they both cater religiously to those constituencies. The future belongs to the party willing to truly dedicate itself to making the government and the economy work for all of us, not just a few of us.

Now there is a core principle — **making the government and economy work for all of us, not just a few of us** — that fits comfortably on a bumper sticker. Maybe it can be plastered on all the silos.

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