

HYPOCRISY.

Radicals both Left and Right are prone to it ...

by Vic Berecz

A few years back, I was asked to make a short speech in Hungary not too long after the communist regime was overthrown. I chose as a topic the New Hampshire state motto – *Live Free or Die* – which I pointed out is not only thought-provoking, but also a bit hypocritical and generally bad advice. While martyrdom may be a great symbolic act, it usually doesn't accomplish much of anything. It's the survivors who get the opportunity and privilege to rebuild.

I'd like to think that we moderates (note that now I'm including myself) look at each specific issue in context and then take a position based on the facts of the situation. When the situation changes, we might take a different position ... hopefully without any *read-my-lips* style reprisals. Changing ones position in a changing world is not hypocritical ... it can make good sense.

One thing a moderate must particularly avoid is true hypocrisy. My reasoning is this ... a lot of the barebones ideas of radicals on both the right and the left sound good in theory. But, their flaws are most likely to be exposed by the hypocrisy of their proponents. So hypocrisy must be avoided if you expect thinking people to take you seriously.

For instance, many so-called conservatives insist that since illegal immigrants broke the law, they must be punished. I keep hearing "What is it about the word 'illegal' that you don't understand?" On the other hand, many of these same people hold up as folk-heroes the "NASCAR pioneers" who bragged about out-running the "Revenuers" while carrying "shine" from the mountains to where the money was. Aren't bootlegging, tax avoidance and reckless driving illegal? Were then! Are now! What is it about the word "illegal" that NASCAR fans and their usually conservative ilk don't understand?

The radicals on the other side of the political spectrum are equally guilty. All too many liberals (or whatever they prefer to call themselves) insist that drilling for needed oil should be prohibited because it will interfere with the habitat of the *Spotted Buttwipe* (that's a *Vic-ism*, substitute any virtually unknown animal you like). Then, all too many of these folks revel at their massive summer compounds on the beach at places like Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. This too is an example of gross hypocrisy ... and NIMBY as well, more on that in a few weeks.

In general, moderates do not blindly follow anybody's dogmatic approach – whether that of the New Hampshire motto, or of radicals on the left or right. That's why so many of us are political "independents" ... party platforms get pretty dogmatic. Also, we tend to be pragmatists and understand that you can't always get everything you want. So we're usually willing to engage in a process that leads toward compromise. That means we're willing to listen, and not only talk. We recognize that "half a loaf is better than none." We are willing to work gradually toward our goals recognizing that those goals may change as we proceed.

The bottom line is that hypocrisy, wherever it rears its ugly head, encourages cynicism and discredits all the ideas of the hypocrite ...

... so all thinking people should both avoid and fear it.