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See, I told you we were lefties [1]

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It has long been one of my contentions that I am a lefty: further, that all of us here at the ASI are in fact on the left. As the Classical Liberals that we are this was of course obvious in the past: but it is still true now. Here is one recent definition of what it means to be on the left economically at present [3]:

> Economists are not all free marketeers ? in fact, they generally lean to the left [4]. Neoclassical economics, broadly speaking, concludes that we should: regulate oligopolies, monopolies and banking; do more to protect the environment and intervene in the case of other externalities; have some public provision of health, education and welfare; and as that survey shows, economists are generally approving of things such as safety regulations.

We certainly think that oligopolies and monopolies, if they are to be allowed to exist at all, should be regulated. The same with banking: either reduce each component to a small enough size that the market alone can regulate it (which implies more of the previous sentence) or it must be regulated more directly. I've certainly argued loudly enough for a carbon tax to intervene in the case of CO2 emissions (assuming that it is indeed a problem in the first place) and it was us here at the ASI that championed the congestion charge. Just as it is now us, here, arguing for road pricing to deal with that very same externality.

Public provision of health, education and welfare: hmm, that's a tad tricker. We certainly agree that there should be public intervention to ensure provision of those things. Less certain that direct public provision is necessary. So we certainly pass those tests of "leaning to the left then".

But as I have argued before, we also share the basic lefty goals: we want a world that is getting better, a greener one, one in which all can achieve their potential and so on. As long as we stick to political vacuity we sign up to pretty much all of the desired goals. All we argue about is what is the best way to get from here to that desired goal. Our general view is that markets do a great deal of that left to themselves: and in those cases where they don't (externalities for example) then a touch of judicous tweaking is all that is required. Which is why we generally advocate markets and the odd bit of judicious tweaking: precisely because we do share the lefty goals, just disagree on how to achieve them.

So say it loud, I'm a lefty and I'm proud!

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