

LIBERAL BUBBLES AND CONSERVATIVE INTELLECTUALS

Nicholas Kristoff explains once again that liberals need to hear from conservatives. Our thinking is clearer when we confront counter-arguments and alternatives, he says, and cites Cass Sunstein's research on the decisions of three-judge panels. He's worried about the dangers of the Trump Administration, but apparently thinks you could vote for Trump and be happy that he won on grounds other than racism or bigotry, though he doesn't even try to offer an explanation of what those alternatives might be or why they are much different in practice from racism and bigotry. He is particularly worried that universities are bubbles of liberalism.

Kristoff doesn't seem to grasp the difference Rayne noted in a comment here between a liberal education and liberal politics. Liberal education merely means that we have a free and open discussion of facts and the lessons and conclusions to be drawn from facts. Liberal politics has to do with social and economic fairness.

But, campuses are full of conservative politics. As we saw here with Amanda Delekta and her College Republicans, there are conservative students at the University of Michigan! Talk to the ROTC crowd, which cuts across college majors, and you'll find plenty of conservative students. And there are plenty of politically conservative academicians. Just check out the engineering and business schools. Or the economics department at most colleges and universities.

Kristoff sort of recognizes this when he points to Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health and a committed Evangelical Christian. What Kristoff doesn't say is whether

Collins believes in evolution or geology. In his list of conservative thinkers, which I put at the end, he doesn't mention whether any of them believe in evolution or science generally or whether they are Birthers or Sandy Hook Truthers or followers of Alex Jones. Let's assume that they all passed this simple test.

But each of them is happy to ride to power on the coattails of those willing to feed the Republican base a constant dose of lies and distortion. Each of them apparently believes that a little racism is a small price to pay for tax cuts for the filthy rich. Each of them seems to believe that science denying is a reasonable price to pay to cut coal plant emission regulations, or that foolish arguments about the national debt justify killing Medicare or ending Social Security. Each of them participated willingly in, or at best, kept quiet about, the 25 year long phony assault on Hillary Clinton, from White Water to emails, from killing Vince Foster to Benghazi. Each of them is willing to put their favorite conservative goal ahead of a decent society.

Kristoff says I should listen to them respectfully, even as they ignore or support the lies and deception that bring them to political prominence.

I'll make a deal with Kristoff. When his conservatives loudly and publicly denounce the Republican tactics of fire-hosing crackpot ideas and conspiracy theories at their base and at the nation generally, and when they start trying to win a battle of ideas in accordance with normal practice in those campus bastions of liberality, then I'll take them seriously.

Here's Kristoff's list of conservative twitter feeds: @DouthatNYT, @MJGerson, @StephensWSJ, @JoeNBC, @peggynoonannyc, @reihan, @Arthurbrooks, @ayaan, @eliotacohen, @Heritage, @danielpipes, @nfergus, @allahpundit, @charlescwcooke, @michaelbd, @SonnyBunch, @asymmetricinfo, @cathyyoung63, @KellyannePolls,

and @jasonrileywsj.