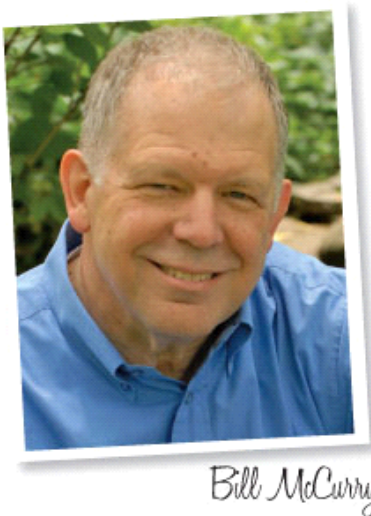


11/1/2017

Come, Let Us Reason Together

Bill McCurry



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Comments on “political” things like minimum wage tend to draw interesting reactions. If, like one reader, you’re confused, let me assure you that indeed my parents were legally married. The management at Ball Publishing are extremely intelligent, even on the day they hired me. (Is it necessary to question parental heritage or an employer’s mental competence if/when a columnist’s opinion differs from yours?)

Business is not a science. Business is an art. Science is repeatable. Science is demonstrative. Science is consistent. Art is none of these. The questions surrounding the minimum wage issue are not a science. The application of minimum wage could easily be variable depending on local conditions. One size will never fit all. If you think you can explain and/or solve any societal problem with nothing more than the words more suited to a bumper sticker, you don’t understand the problem.

The initial step in solving any problem is comprehending it. Understanding it. Framing it in the right context. But first we must be able to discuss it sanely, calmly and rationally. That includes defining the terms. Some call “minimum wage” a “living wage.” Others see two different discussions with different motivators and guidelines. Doesn’t it make sense to resolve the differences by first determining what those differences are? Not the merits of the various positions, but just understanding what the various positions are. Define the problem and define the terms used in defining the problem.

Traditionally, debate is taught in schools by having everyone on the debate team prepared to argue both sides of the topic. You don’t know what your position will be until you take the stage, so you must intimately know and understand both sides of the argument. This makes you a better debater. The same approach can make you a more informed citizen.

“Fake News” has become the phrase of the year. Mark Zuckerberg allegedly admitted that he underestimated how Facebook played a role in distributing misinformation. If the big machine in the sky deemed you to have certain political leanings, then it only fed you stories that you would find agreeable. Apparently, the logic was that if you were given another side of the story, you would recoil in horror and not return to Facebook.

Are you so insecure in your beliefs that if you’re given information contrary to your biases you’ll change your behavior rather than question your rationale? Really?

Conflict resolution is what this is all about. How do you bring parties together so they can agree to disagree and then move forward together? When is the right time to compromise and when is the right time to hold fast? Bring this around to your garden center. There are an unlimited number of ways to design a garden. Some could be wrong, like putting a shade-loving plant in bright sun all day. However, most designs are a matter of taste and could be acceptable or unacceptable to a variety of educated people. They're neither "right" nor "wrong." None of them warrants name calling or questioning the marital status of the designer's parents.

Can we take this ability to see various garden designs as acceptable and carry it over to societal issues? Is it possible to accept that other opinions have value? More important, can we come together and look for commonality among our various ideas?

Attacking the position of someone who doesn't always think like you do hurts your own cause. One person rarely has all the answers. By looking for commonality with those holding differing viewpoints we open ourselves up to collaboration. The best ideas usually are formed in a collaborative process that brings in various experiences and perspectives. Excluding those with various experiences and thought processes—while hurling insults—deprives you of the insight and wisdom to craft your best possible answer. **GP**

Bill would love to hear from you with questions, comments or ideas for future columns. Please contact him at wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com or (609) 688-1169.