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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 005

June 10, 2011

Greetings!

Today is my birthday. I am now 53, and am in a particularly celebratory mood! Even though 53 is not one of those "milestone" years (like 50, or 21, or 75) I still find so much exuberance in simply being alive, in living life to its fullest, in living in the greatest country on earth!

And one of my favorite pasttimes is writing Uncommon Sense. It's a great vehicle for self-expression and an outlet for me to "tell it like it is" (or, at least, as I see things.) I'm grateful to the various emails I receive from my growing readership. Please keep 'em coming!

People close to me at this time of year routinely ask me what I "want" for my birthday, and I am usually uncertain how to answer that. But in this case, I would say, if you want to acknowledge me on my birthday, you can do so by simply forwarding this issue of Uncommon Sense to three people you believe might find it of interest.

And enjoy this issue of Uncommon Sense. I really enjoyed writing it. Even -- or especially -- on my birthday.

Cheers,

Ara Norwood

Jump-Start Your Quest to Become a Transition Figure

OK, I'm back. Last issue of Uncommon Sense dealt with the notion of a Transition Figure and the

fact that we are not bound by our past. I'd like to share an idea of how to become just such a figure.

Here is a key suggestion: ***find a coach or a mentor to help you.*** And this suggestion applies just as much to someone like LW, a very seasoned and experienced professional (and a regular reader of Uncommon Sense) as it does to someone who is young and rather new to business and development.

How do you start?

Sure, you can go to the search engines and type in "finding a coach" but I recommend you simply ask yourself what is it you wish to address. What aspect of your life do you want to work on?



Once you identify the area(s) that needs attention, look around you. Consider the people you know, or know of. Ask yourself, *Who do I know, even if only slightly, that possesses the qualities I am trying to emulate? Who do I know who excels where I am weak?*

If you get stuck, consider people from work, from other institutions or organizations you have an association with (i.e., church, a service organization, sports team, political committee, networking group, etc.) Even if you cannot think of anyone directly, you can go to people you do know and see if they can introduce you to a person they know who possesses such qualities. Ideally, the choice should be an individual who commands your respect and who has significantly more life experience than you.

Once that person is identified, approach them with a straightforward request. Let them know you are trying to develop yourself, that you are seeking the expertise of someone to assist you in that development, and that you have been deeply impressed by that person's characteristics and level of expertise. As you have come to see them as a person of depth and high character, you wish to find out if they would be able and willing to

mentor or coach you on a periodic basis.

At the very least, this person will be flattered that you sought them out. If they decline, so be it. Perhaps the timing wasn't right. Don't be dejected or lose faith in the process. Go find another possible mentor. Eventually someone will agree to assist.

And when they do, try to implement some of the things they suggest, and try to show your appreciation to them in some way, perhaps through a hand-written thank-you card. But most mentor's are simply pleased and satisfied when they see you implementing what they suggested, and when they see the growth that eventuates from such implementation.

Over time, through practice and patience, you'll find that your skills will evolve, your mannerisms will improve, and you'll be more capable and more polished than you were.

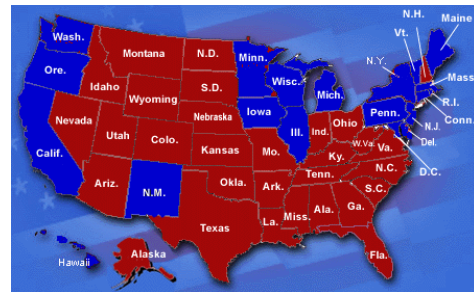
Not a bad outcome.

So what are you waiting for? Find a coach or a mentor. This week!

Seeking Clarity: Left vs. Right

Setting the Record Straight

Two issues ago (#3) in this publication, I introduced a concept about opposing world-views. I began by noting that I was then reviewing the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, (a review which I completed just this morning), noting that the two men had very different conceptions about slavery. Lincoln felt slavery was morally wrong; Douglas did not feel slavery was morally wrong and did feel that the practice of slavery is a question that individual states should decide. I then pointed out that just as those two men saw the world very differently,



today there seems to be two viewpoints in America the compete for dominance. I labeled these two views "Left of Center" and "Right of Center."

In this column, I want to share what I believe are some of the general contours of these two "ways of seeing" as I consider it a fascinating question. I should hasten to add that I am not here to advocate for one or the other position, but merely to shed light on both in as even-handed a manner as I can.

Let me begin by first identifying institutions or groups that tend to side with the one or the other. I emphasize the word *tend* as the tendencies of a given group to be either Left or Right are by no means complete or total. Still as a general rule, the following entities *tend* to be Right-of-Center:

- Fox News
- Evangelical Churches
- Church-based colleges and universities
- Talk Radio
- The Wall Street Journal Opinion Page
- The Boy Scouts of America
- The United States Armed Forces
- Most of "middle-America"
- The Republican Party

For entities that *tend* to be Left-of-Center in their ideology, we have the following:

- Most newspapers
- Virtually all television media
- Trial Lawyers
- Unions - especially Teacher's Unions
- Colleges and Universities
- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- The American Civil Liberties Union
- Virtually any activist group
- Cultural Elites
- The Democratic Party

Most readers are probably aware that the label "conservative" is usually associated with the Right, and the label "liberal" is usually associated with the

Left. Thus, the notion of a conservative world-view suggests values and approaches that bring to mind words such as *cautious, maintenance, tradition, standards, and continuity*. The notion of a liberal world-view suggests values and approaches that bring to mind words such as *abundance, new, exploration, tolerance, and change*.

It's hard to find fault with any of these values in isolation, be they conservative or liberal. It seems to me that *tradition* and *standards* are just as important as *abundance* and *exploration*. Yet on closer inspection, we find that by themselves, all of these conservative and liberal values, in isolation, are amoral - that is, they are neither good nor bad. Value judgments about them can only be made in the context of the times and the circumstances they are being applied to. If things are not as they should be, a liberal approach may make things better (or possibly worse.) If things are as they should be, a conservative approach may be helpful in maintaining a good thing, but at the same time, may prevent an even better thing from occurring as the status quo is maintained. Thus, there are potential risks with either approach.

When it comes to specific issues that we face today, here is where the two sides tend to land.

A person who is Left-of-Center tends to believe or adopt positions such as the following:

- A woman's right to choose to abort her unborn baby is a right that must be protected.
- War is always wrong (or almost always wrong) and should be avoided at all costs; we should always strive to negotiate with our opponents or try to understand where we might have wronged them. Indeed, the military is an institution that could be looked at with distrust if not disdain.
- The best way to help strengthen the economy is to raise taxes, especially on the rich.
- Bigger government is a good thing.
- The United Nations is a valuable and impressive institution and America would be

better off if it were governed by the United Nations.

- Marriage is an optional institution and there is nothing fundamentally strange about redefining marriage to include same-sex couples.
- The death penalty is a terrible thing; all convicted murderers, no matter the circumstances of their particular crime, should be allowed to live.
- School prayer is a bad thing but passing out condoms to high school students in sex education classes is a necessary thing.

By contrast, a person who is Right-of-Center tends to believe or adopt other positions, including these:

- Religious faith is an important part of one's life.
- Patriotic symbols, documents, monuments, or institutions, such as the American Flag, the Declaration of Independence, the Washington Monument, the office of the President, the Great Seal of the United States, Mount Rushmore, and songs such as the *Star Spangled Banner*, *America the Beautiful*, *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, *God Bless America* and *America, My Country 'Tis of Thee* are all considered highly treasured, and that there really is such a thing as American Exceptionalism.
- Taxes are necessary to a point, but the best way to improve the economy is to live within our means, and to keep more of the money we earn.
- Smaller government is preferred to bigger government.
- Liberty and freedom are preferred to regulation and rules.
- Self-sufficiency is a key value.
- Personal responsibility is a key value.
- The institution of marriage should be protected, and should not be changed or redefined.

Much more could be said, and much more will be said in upcoming issues of *Uncommon Sense*, but this should serve as a starting point in spelling out

some of the basic differences between the Left-of-Center worldview and the Right-of-Center worldview. This first column is merely meant to lay some groundwork. I will be building on this foundation more in the future.

If you have comments or questions (or corrections) on any of the above, write to me at ara@aranorwood.com.

Shameless Plug: Don't Put Your Audience To Sleep!

A number of months ago I attended a seminar. It was awful. The seminar leader, though quite accomplished in running several businesses, seemed to break every rule imaginable. I wanted to get up and walk about, but then an idea struck me: Why not capture all the things he is doing wrong and write a paper spelling them out -- as well as what to do differently.

I wrote the paper. It's a Special Report and it's available on my website.

If you give presentations and you'd like to make sure you don't make some of the same mistakes as the presenter I endured, you can download solid information and advice for less than \$30. [Click Here](#) and add the very first item, "**How Not To Do It**" to your Shopping Cart. It's easy and fast.

From Ara's Journal

Abraham Lincoln remains a very impressive figure in U.S. history. He was not only, arguably, our greatest president (rivalled only by George Washington) but he was a truly good human being.



I seem to recall a story involving Lincoln writing a letter to someone during his presidency. The letter was neither salutary nor complimentary. The letter was a heated

castigation of this individual. But Lincoln never actually mailed the letter. He sat on it for a day or so, then opted to simply hang on to it.

I suspect he understood that "sleeping on it" can often bring a different perspective with the passage of time.

Sometimes, when I think of individuals or institutions that have flagrantly wronged me, I get incensed and my blood seems to boil. My gut instincts are for retribution, revenge, or at least justice. Sometimes I think of launching a law suit. Isn't that what lawyers are there for?

But I've noticed that if I give it some time, take a deep breath, and not react hastily, that time is a friend, and perspective and balance are restored. It's not that I'm utterly against utilizing lawyers when necessary, but I fear that they are utilized far too frequently than is warranted.

And I also fear that feelings for revenge and evening the score preoccupy many of us far too often, which not only distracts us from being productive, but somehow is a blight on our own soul.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

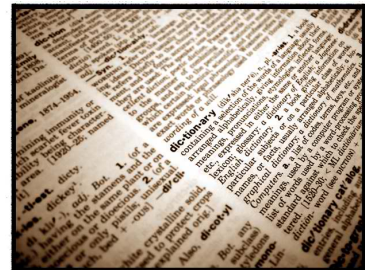
Portend, verb

Pronunciation: pôr'tend

Meaning: This word refers to a sign or a warning that something momentous, or even something ominous, is about to occur.

Usage:

- *The fact remains that the chairman's absence is highly unusual and may portend some very unfortunate events.*
- *The question concerns what these changes*



portend for our national security.

- *The poor showing in New Hampshire portended ill for the candidate's campaign.*

New Subscribers: the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems