

Lene Johansen speaking on December 6th 2007

I would first like to thank Liberala Gruppen for the invitation and for your time. To give you an idea of my background, I am first and foremost a science reporter, but I have read too much economics and been active in too much policy for my own good. I have gone the hard path from the Liberal Party in Norway, to being a full-fledged advocate of free markets and free individuals. I became a partner at the Eudoxa think tank in 2001, and I was also recruited to help giving birth to a state based think tank in the US in 2004.

I have the honor of being the 14th Warren T. Brookes Journalism fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), which is as close to a US version of Eudoxa as you will find, albeit they are bigger. I am working on a book about the human cost of plant biotechnology for my fellowship, but have not been able to stay out of the climate debate as I can see where the momentum is taking us, and I don't want anyone I love to go where that is heading.

There's a joke in free market circuits in Washington, DC and like most jokes, it has a grain of truth in it. Environmentalists are like watermelons, they are green on the outside and red on the inside.

The worldview of the left wing environmentalist, the most common strain of environmentalism, is the limits for growth movement with roots in the Club of Rome from the 1960's. At the core of their beliefs is Neo-Malthusian theory that growth in population will eventually outgrow the growth in food production. History and economic data has over and over again proved Malthus wrong, but bad ideas die hard as we can see on the resurgence of totalitarianism in Russia and Socialism in South America.

Free market environmentalism is rooted in respect for individual rights, and the ideas of non-interventionism and market efficiency. The worldview is founded in the Julian Simon tradition of a cornucopian

worldview where no limits exist, only human creativity and adaptation. The works of Johan Norberg are examples of this worldview.

There are several problems with this worldview, and they mostly belong in communication and the cultural differences.

1. Focus on creating economic growth and poverty elimination; while these are our solutions, the problem is formulated by the Neo- Malthusians. Our goal is to improve quality of life. A better environment is part of this improvement, but I have yet to find a free marketeer that thinks that just a better environment is the goal. I have neither yet found the silver bullet that will resolve this cultural clash. Some authors, such as Chris Horner in the *Politically Incorrect Guide to Global Warming*, have made extensive lists of proof that the environmentalists do not have human quality of life as their goal. Every time I have seen them presented in debates, they are dismissed as either malevolent misinterpretations or cherry picking. Trying to trap your opponent to spill the beans is exceedingly hard, and pointing out the differences in goals might give the opponent the ammunition to claim you don't care. What gives?
2. We give rational arguments in debates with a high level of emotional drama, which means we miss the target audience. CEI published a nice Field Guide of Communication a few years back. One of the authors in the book, Alex Castellano, presents a compelling map of constituents. His map is based on an extensive experience in US politics, and the Scandinavian map might be a bit different, but the general idea is still the same. On the far right you have the cross segment, where the primary values are God and Family. Then you have the flag segment, which is similar, but the values are secular based. Then you have the dollar sign segment, which is who free marketeers usually talk to. Primary values are

economic growth and a balanced budget. Our first stop on the left is the heart segment, or what Castellano calls the fair and care democrat. Finally on the far left you have the equality segment, which are all about equality in outcome. I want to focus on the heart segment, because those are the people we have to reach to expand our base.

As free marketeers, we are all about fairness, helping the weak in our community, and making the world a better place. We just never formulate our arguments that way, because between us, we talk like we belong to the dollar segment. Norberg's documentary is a good attempt at reaching to the left, beyond the dollar cluster. We need more work like that.

3. Left wing environmentalists focus on interventionism, and non interventionist solutions are hard for a politician to promote. They have to do something to prove that they care, right? If you have a hammer, almost everything look like a nail, right? If you are a politician, you have one tool: Interventionism. I have talked to people, who were members of the Republican Revolution in 1995. They swept into Congress, both nationally and the statehouses, to clean house. It's been 12 years now, some of them are gone, and the rest of them are part of "business as usual". So when I ask what happened to their ideal of small government and non interventionism, they get a bit embarrassed and some are honest enough to tell you that they too got caught up in the great scam of government. We gave them hammers, and they started to see nails everywhere. Watching hard core free marketeers trying to explain on television the rather long cause and effect of low taxation and regulation on intervention, and thus on the environment, is painful. Our challenge is how we turn these long reasoned arguments and indirect means to an end into television sound bytes. We are no longer in the era of Abraham Lincoln where a political debate could take

8 hours, and you could send the audience home for supper, expecting them to come back when they were done. The core point here is that we want things to be done, but we don't want government to do it. How do we sell that?

4. The last point is not specific to environmentalism. It is the communication scourge of our movement. We sell the solution, not the problem. But if you sell the problem, it is easier to define the solution that follows from your definition. It is a classical marketing principle; you sell the ring around the collar, not the detergent. Our opponents got a head start and define people as the problem, people and economic growth. It is immensely hard to reframe an issue after it's defined, and although most of the free marketeers think economic growth is a good in itself, don't expect the people in the heart cluster to think so. I recently talked to an editor at the World Wildlife Fund, who was concerned about tigers, and I pointed out the work of my Indian freedom hero, Barun Mitra, and his work on establishing tiger farms to supply and thus eliminate the black market that fuel tiger extinction. Because we both agreed that the black market was the problem, she had to admit that it was a workable solution, even though she struggled emotionally with the idea of tigers in farms.

I have not gone into any specific issues so far. Partially because I think we have a solid body of ideas and solutions on everything from forestry and wild life management on one hand to climate change and pollution on the other hand. People like R.J. Smith, Julian Simon, and an army of policy wonks in think tanks all over the world have already done a lot of the thinking. There is no point to reinvent the wheel. If you are looking for materials on specific issues, I will do my best to guide you to the right sources and the right people.

Our problem is not that we have bad solutions, but we are communicating them poorly, often from the underdog position. Thus I have pointed out some of our challenges in reaching out with those ideas, rather than beating you over the head with individual issues that may or may not be of interest to you.

To leave you on a positive note, I have a couple of pointers for how we can get our message through.

1. Compare notes, coordinate efforts: Grover Nordquist's Wednesday Morning Meetings is a good model. Every Wednesday morning, more than 100 people gather to compare notes on what the right wing needs to focus on during the upcoming weeks. Other models are the Cooler Heads Coalition that meets once a month to talk about upcoming hearings, who to haul in, and whatever else is going on. The night I left for Scandinavia, I was invited to the monthly wild game dinner for the free market environmentalist policy people. There is no reason why we cannot enjoy ourselves, and work!
2. Flood them! I had just submitted an op ed about climate change to the most prestigious op ed page in Norway that was rejected, when I talked to a scientist that had been rejected by the same paper on the same topic. As he was less timid than me, he called the editor in chief who told him that this debate was over. Getting 10 different op eds on the same subject, maybe a new round of different ones on the same subject a week later. It makes it a whole lot harder to disregard it as fringe opinions.
3. Talk to your audience: We tend to make arguments that are convincing to us, and to our friends. We are already in the boat, but how do you make arguments that are convincing to those that we need to get onboard? If you are talking to the heart segment, don't give them UNDP numbers, give them UNDP figures in pictures that evoke emotions. Saying that 10 per cent of the women are living below the poverty line is not as efficient as saying every 10th mother cannot afford to feed their children.

4. My last point is a point I cannot stress enough. You should assume that your opponent has the best intentions in mind... no matter how misguided he or she is. This is a lesson I took from Hayek. Political operatives that stay in the game a long time tends to get jaded and angry. That shows in their tone of voice. Keep in mind that your opponent is benevolent, but misguided, and that will show in your tone as well. It is a tone that looks better on TV and it makes your lives less filled with strife as you don't have to be apprehensive about people's reactions when you reach out to them. One example of this was at the recent conference of the National Science Writers Association ... I was talking to some people when one guy looked at my name tag and burst out "OMG, she is from that horrible group!". Where do you go from there? A little later in the evening. I started talking to the guy, turns out he did not know anything about CEI other than we had produced an animation of Al Gore spewing hot air, which had upset his boss. I did not make a new friend that night, but he did have a more open mind since he had figured out that reasonable people did think that climate change was not a looming catastrophe.

I hope I have provided you with a few problems, and a few pointers to help us start a discussion about how we can create a better environment and a better life for humans, though free markets and letting individuals pursue their own prosperity. Thanks for your attention.