



## LEFT AND RIGHT DIFFERENCES: DOES IT FEEL GOOD OR DOES IT DO GOOD? DENNIS PRAGER

A fundamental difference between Left and Right concerns how each assesses public policies. The Right asks, “Does it do good?” The Left is more likely to ask a different question.

Take the minimum wage, for example. In 1987, the New York Times editorialized against any minimum wage. The title of the editorial said it all – “The Right Minimum Wage: \$0.00.”

“There’s a virtual consensus among economists,” wrote the Times editorial, “that the minimum wage is an idea whose time has passed. Raising the minimum wage by a substantial amount would price working people out of the job market...Why did the New York Times editorialize against the minimum wage? Because it asked the question: “Does it do good?”

But 27 years later, the New York Times editorial page wrote the very opposite of what it had written in 1987, and called for a major increase in the minimum wage. In that time, the Times editorial page had moved further and further left and was now preoccupied not with the question, “does it do good”? – but with the question, “does it feel good”?. And it feels good to raise poor people’s minimum wage.

A second example is affirmative action. Study after study – and, more importantly, common sense and facts – has shown the negative effects that race-based affirmative action has had on many black students. Lowering college admissions standards for black applicants has ensured a number of awful results.

Just to cite one, more black students fail to graduate college. Why? Because too many have been admitted to a college that demands more academic rigor than they are prepared for. Rather than attend a school that matches their academic skills, a school where they might thrive, they too often fail at the more demanding school that lowered its standards to admit them.

It’s clear that supporters of race-based affirmative action ask, “Does it feel good?” rather than, “Does it do good?”

A third example is pacifism and other forms of “peace activism.”

Many people on the Left have a soft spot for pacifism – the belief that killing another human being is always wrong. Not all leftists are pacifists, but pacifism almost always emanates from the Left, and just about all leftists support “peace activism,” “peace studies,” and whatever else contains the word “peace.”

The Right, on the other hand, while just as desirous of peace as the Left – what conservative parent wants their child to die in battle? – knows that pacifism and most “peace activists” increase the chances of war, not peace.

Nothing guarantees the triumph of evil like refusing to fight it. Great evil is therefore never defeated by peace activists, but by superior military might. The Allied victory in World War II is an obvious example. And violent Islamists today need to be killed before they behead, enslave, and torture more innocents.

Supporters of pacifism, peace studies, American nuclear disarmament, and American military withdrawal from countries in which it has fought do not ask, “Does it do good?” Because it almost never does good.

Did the total withdrawal of America from Iraq do good? Of course not. It led to the rise of Islamic State with its mass murder and torture. Did the American withdrawal from Vietnam do good? No. It led to the violent Communist takeover of South Vietnam. On the other hand, because American troops did not leave South Korea, Japan, and Germany, those countries have become three of the most prosperous and free countries in the world.

So, then, why do liberals support a higher minimum wage if it doesn’t do good? Because it makes them feel good about themselves: We liberals, unlike conservatives, care about the poor.

Why do liberals support race-based affirmative action? For the same reason. It makes liberals feel good about themselves. They appear to be righting the wrongs of historical racism.

And, the same holds true for left-wing peace activism. It’s nice to think of oneself as a peace activist.

All this helps to explain why young people are so much more likely to be liberal than conservative. They haven’t lived long enough to really know what does good. But they do know what feels good.

As society moves further and further to the left, so does the preoccupation with feeling good over doing good. The world is getting worse and worse, but many people are feeling better and better about themselves while it does.

I’m Dennis Prager.