

Progressive Manifesto: Policy, Priority, Strategy

2017

Thomas A. Burns Ph.D.

Klamath Falls, Oregon

I offer this Manifesto in three parts. The Policy Section presents what, as a progressive social scientist, I regard as the big picture position of Progressives/Liberals and is intended to cover the full range of relevant categories. This is a Comprehensive Position Statement that reflects what I understand to be the essential tenant of the Progressive/Liberal perspective: to sustain an inclusive outlook at all social and ecological scales that accepts the obligation to act responsibly and to respect the fundamental right for All to exist and to contribute to the overall fabric of Life. It is my view that Progressives need to start with an awareness of what constitutes this Grand Liberal Point of View. The Priority/Theme Section identifies what I see as the central issues that underlie and connect the specific progressive positions/values from the Policy statement. Progressives cannot expect to pursue or achieve "It" all at once. Indeed, the big picture can be rather overwhelming, and as such a bit daunting. Yes, there is a very long way to go! The Strategic Principles Section identifies some general action management criteria that can promote success in achieving the overall progressive objectives. For those who want to start with an overview, skip the Policy Section and go directly to the Priority/Theme Section and then return to the Policy Section for detail.

POLICY SECTION

General and Individual

- 1) Think and feel broadly/inclusively – socially, ecologically, cosmologically
- 2) Examine all of the possibilities/perspectives in assessing any issue
- 3) Support, promote and sustain open-mindedness
- 4) Resist/reject all forms of claimed absolute truth whether political, economic, social, cultural, religious, or scientific
- 5) Tolerate/respect/discuss honest differences of opinion when based on different weights placed on all of the facts
- 6) Reject opinions/conclusions based on selected facts
- 7) Expose/reject irrational/non-logical arguments
- 8) Beware of arguments/opinions/claims based on emotional appeals
- 9) Respect the position of the "group," but insist on personal review
- 10) Respect tradition but support positive change
- 11) Respect diversity in all things
- 12) Recognize and celebrate intelligence, creativity, innovation, and effort

when they contribute to the common good

- 13) Avoid/reject celebrity/notoriety
- 14) Listen, participate and contribute; avoid preaching/pontificating
- 15) Define and pursue a clear, responsible direction – while at the same time being respectful and patient
- 16) Restrain activities to the extent they are mostly self-aggrandizing
- 17) Examine the inner self; pursue self-actualization

Society and Culture

- 1) Support and act to realize equality, fairness and respect in all personal relations, between the sexes, in all public institutions, and among all people
- 2) Encourage/assist all who contribute to the social good at the level they are able
- 3) Rehabilitate/reject all who fail to contribute to the social good at the level they are able
- 4) Celebrate and reward talent, effort and wisdom to the extent they are used to contribute to the social good
- 5) Value, act and promote communal benefit above personal gain at all levels
- 6) Value, act and promote cooperation above competition; if women in general are better cooperators, give them the leadership roles until men learn to curtail their competitive inclinations
- 7) Locate individual and group identity and status in quality social relations and community at all levels

Politics

- 1) Support and abide by universal human rights
- 2) Support the establishment and maintenance in all nations and states of democratic institutions with separate legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government [or the equivalent]
- 3) Reject all authoritarian forms of government
- 4) Require all eligible adults to vote in elections at all levels if they want to participate in the system of public benefits
- 5) Require all eligible voters to demonstrate that they are informed on the primary issues and major candidates before being allowed to vote in any election
- 6) Restrict the undue influence of money/wealth/power in the political process
- 7) Support exclusively publicly financed elections at all political levels
- 8) Greatly restrict the monetary and informational input of non-candidate

- sources in all elections; candidates must speak for themselves
- 9) Require all public officials to disclose any and all conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest in their deliberations and decision making
 - 10) Require all public officials to recuse themselves where appropriate
 - 11) Require political representatives to justify all of the laws they propose and the votes they make in terms of the breadth of the public benefit achieved
 - 12) Require all elected public servants to disclose all of their financial holdings prior to becoming an official candidate for that role
 - 13) Support reasonable term limits for elected public officials in any one role to discourage representatives from becoming career politicians and more potentially corruptible
 - 14) Support requiring candidates to the U.S. Senate and to the Presidency and Vice Presidency to have a minimum of six years of prior government experience
 - 15) Support requiring the U.S. Senate to process and vote on nominees to the Supreme Court within six months of their nomination
 - 16) Support closing the revolving door between public service and all occupations related to that service
 - 17) Support real debates in elections with independent debate judges assigning winners and losers based on legitimate debate criteria on each issue discussed as well as the candidates' overall performance
 - 18) Support altering the United Nations charter to eliminate the veto option for any nation on the security council; require super majority support [2/3] for all major decisions of the security council and engage the general assembly more fully

Economy

- 1) Support relative income and wealth equality while rewarding initiative, creativity, industry, and talent in so far as they contribute to the common good; share the wealth/resources locally, regionally, nationally, internationally
- 2) Avoid hoarding wealth and material possessions as the basis for security
- 3) Locate security in quality social relations and community at all levels
- 4) Separate real individual and group needs from wants
- 5) Limit the use of credit to supplying actual needs
- 6) Keep living standard expectations realistic and responsible
- 7) Support integrating commercial, non-profit, governmental and philanthropic sectors in one overall workforce and economy. Such

integration allows for members of the workforce to shift seamlessly between sectors in a full employment economy where all adults contribute to the common good in one way or another to the extent they are able for as long as they are able. No retirement, no unemployment compensation, no need for philanthropy, no need for a largely volunteer powered non-profit domain

- 8) Support a minimum national income in a fully integrated economy; but to qualify, all adults must contribute at the level they are able in one sector or another. No free ride; older citizens and the disabled remain engaged and contribute in the manner they are able and thereby are guaranteed this minimum income. No need for social security
- 9) Support as a full time job one parent raising the first two children through age 14 per family; additional children at private expense
- 10) Support redefining corporations as existing to provide a positive return to shareholders while contributing to the public good and protecting the environment

Justice and Law Enforcement

- 1) Support justice based on fair laws and responsible law enforcement
- 2) Support the intent of the law, not just the letter of the law
- 3) Support rehabilitation, restrain punishment except in extreme cases
- 4) Reject torture under any name
- 5) Reject loophole hunting
- 6) Respect legal protections, but reject liability hunting; negligence, not honest mistakes and true accidents, must be the basis for liability claims and litigation
- 7) Reject violence – both virtual and real; this includes gratuitous violence in games, sports and all entertainments
- 8) Support strengthening the authority and role of the World Court under the United Nations
- 9) Support establishing a fully independent, fully authorized arbitration system within the existing judicial system to settle all serious disputes and conflicts at all levels from individuals to nations [world court at the international level]
- 10) With the implementation of a universal, mandatory arbitration system, support the reallocation to the common good of the enormous savings which result from eliminating warfare and the associated military industrial complex; nuclear weapons become obsolete and a condition of peace becomes the norm
- 11) Support restricting appointments to federal judgeships to a maximum

- term of 20 years or age 75, whichever comes first
- 12) Support federal registration of all firearms owned by or sold/transferred to any civilian
- 13) Restrict civilian firearm carry, transportation and use to target and hunting activities

Information

- 1) Challenge/reject partial truths, misinformation, falsehoods, and lies
- 2) Require media and all public information sources to be accurate, reliable and reasonably complete; violations result in serious consequences
- 3) Require the media to stop the worldwide, stress inducing chase of the sensational and disastrous and cover equally positive events and developments
- 4) Support the creation of a separate and independent information evaluation branch of government to oversee, assess and report promptly and prominently on the validity of all major information purveyed for public consumption by the print or broadcast media or by means of the internet
- 5) Support the worldwide electronic scanning, storage and indexing of all copyrighted and archival information so it is available to all via the internet

Education

- 1) Support basic and higher public education [including professional education] for all citizens who qualify so long as this education results in recognizable public benefit
- 2) Support a full public school year with two two week vacations and one three week vacation, all strategically separated in the annual schedule
- 3) Fully support public school teachers financially and socially so as to attract and retain high quality candidates
- 4) Support student acquisition of basic knowledge, skills, and mental, emotional, physical abilities [critical thinking, intuition, empathy, motion]
- 5) Support a full range curriculum including STEM, recreation, arts and the humanities to assure educating the whole student
- 6) Support community and experiential based education – keep children engaged with and respectful of adults and seniors. Structure the education experience to eliminate the separate and dysfunctional adolescent subculture [gangs, cliques, bullies, groupies, etc.]
- 7) Support strategically incorporating media and computer based programs in the curriculum to individualize the student learning experience, sustain motivation, and reduce the sources of disruption

- 8) Support limiting student numbers per teacher and class room, and provide teaching assistance in the form of older students, seniors, student teachers, and teacher's aids
- 9) Support remedial education – especially early-on for basic skills
- 10) Support national basic skills standards in primary and secondary public education with great flexibility in how these standards are achieved
- 11) Respect the right of all citizens to use any language, but support English as the national language of the united states and require all citizens to demonstrate basic verbal and written English language proficiency in order to participate in and receive the benefits of the nation

Science and Technology

- 1) Support basic scientific research and the prompt and universal dissemination to the public of fact based, peer reviewed information
- 2) Support substantive technological advances that improve the quality of life and that are socially positive and ecologically sustainable
- 3) Avoid gadget/electronic/appliance/vehicle, etc. - surface fads and changes for the sake of “style”

Ecology

- 1) Support global and local ecological responsibility/sustainability
- 2) Respect the web of life; avoid species extinction
- 3) Conserve all natural resources; recycle
- 4) Support reduction in human population to a level the planet can sustain without depleting natural resources or polluting Earth's ecosystem [2-3 billion]
- 4) Support global strict clean air and water environmental regulations
- 5) Support development and use of alternative non-fossil fuel, non-polluting energy sources [sodium metal based fission reactors which use spent fuel and eliminate long term storage, as well as the holy grail of controlled fusion are nuclear options that need to be explored without prejudice]
- 6) Support immediate and substantial commitment to national and international agreements/programs/treaties to mitigate climate change
- 7) Support the elimination of nuclear weapons and the potential for radiation poisoning of the planet
- 8) Support passive solar design and retrofit for all buildings and community plans
- 9) Support effective grey water reuse
- 10) Support organic agriculture and stringent testing prior to approval for all chemical pesticides and fertilizers

- 11) Require all proposed genetic engineering and GMOs to pass expert and ethical review to demonstrate substantive need and intra and inter species safety before proceeding to experimentation; and require stringent testing of all experimental GMOs before implementation; exercise the greatest restraint for cross species genetic modifications
- 12) Require all human genetic engineering – especially to the zygote – to be limited to improvement of human health and basic function – not appearance – with results available to all
- 13) Support private land use laws and preservation of agricultural and other important resource lands
- 14) Support multiple use and responsible and sustainable public land policy and management
- 15) Support annual adjustment of reasonable fees for access to public lands for resource extraction purposes [grazing, timber, mining, drilling, etc.]
- 16) Support preservation and management of national monuments and parks

Religion/the Spiritual

- 1) Support the spiritual core experience in all religions – the unification experience – available through the intuitive function of mind
- 2) Support simple, non-reified behaviors/means/techniques/vehicles to access this core unification experience
- 3) Support the moral [respect/love] consequence of experiencing the expanded, infinitely connected sense of reality and the self that results from the unification experience
- 4) Support the systematic development of intuitive mental competence in all people, just as we support the development of rational competence
- 5) Reject the dogmatic trappings in belief, ritual and limited/special access [eg. priesthood] in all religions
- 6) Reject the claim of exclusive and absolute truth in all religions/belief systems
- 7) Reject the notion that tolerance is a strategic approach to deal with the intolerance which is inherent in absolute, fundamentalist belief – the source of all conflict based on religion

Art and Recreation

- 1) Support art that provides a substantial/positive social and/or spiritual message
- 2) Reject art/entertainment that is violent, merely sensational and/or offers a minimal social or spiritual message
- 3) Support recreation that provides productive exercise and that has a

minimal negative impact on other users, natural resources and the environment in general

Medicine/Health

- 1) Support publicly sponsored universal physical and mental health care for all citizens
- 2) Support a universal health care system that addresses all health related needs [diagnosis, tests, treatment, drugs, home, nursing and assisted living care]
- 3) Support the highest quality, most efficient, most cost effective universal health care system [single payer – non-profit or government run]
- 4) Support publicly funded basic health care research with results available equally to all health care businesses to develop
- 5) Support stringent federal drug/treatment testing and approval with the option for health care providers – with patient approval – to participate in trials for new/experimental treatments
- 6) Require all medical records to be kept current and stored in a universal electronic form available to relevant health care providers and patients
- 7) Require all adults to provide and keep current, an officially recorded medical directive with copies on file with their primary physician and hospital
- 8) Support a death with dignity option for all who qualify based on their most current medical directive and on approval by three independent and relevant health care professionals

PRIORITY/THEME SECTION

- 1) Support Much Greater Cooperation at ALL societal levels. All other progressive changes depend on greater societal cooperation being achieved. Cooperation must trump competition in determining who we are and how we behave. Greater cooperation leads to increased integration and eventually to societal unification. In the long term, this evolution is essential to the survival of the human species in the civilized, complex state. Increased cooperation supports the growth in importance and influence of the United Nations, the World Court, and a mandatory conflict arbitration system, which together serve to eliminate warfare and the military industrial complex. That is Peace!
- 2) Support Sustainability. The prevailing promotion of an expanding population, expanding economy, and expanding demand for natural resources is not sustainable. These three “expansion” zones are interrelated and have to be addressed as a whole. This is a very difficult, but extremely important. Climate change and most energy issues fall under this theme of sustainability.

3) Support Universal Human Rights and Equality. This theme arises in several categories – economic, political, judicial, educational, ecological, social, and health. Moreover, equality as a concern appears regardless of social scale – from family to community to state, to nation, to united nations. Most fundamental here are women's rights – especially problematic in the underdeveloped and religiously defined nations. Achieving and sustaining a reasonable level of equality in all respects is an issue both within and across societies/nations. It is an essential goal if conflicts are to be avoided.

4) Support for Universal Human Mental Skills. reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking. Education must instill these skills globally so humans everywhere can accurately assess conditions and proposals and participate meaningfully in decisions that contribute to making real progress.

5) Support for the Universal Dissemination of Accurate/Reliable Information. The use of critical skills only bears fruit if the information these skills process is accurate and reliable. Free speech can not be allowed to protect the dissemination for public consumption of disinformation, falsehoods, fake news, hate speech and propaganda from any source. Basic scientifically based knowledge about the physical, energetic, ecological, and social domains must be available to all. Good decisions, regardless of the topic or issue, depend on accurate, complete and factual knowledge. Human rights do not extend to human groups choosing to dwell in fantasy, delusion, or ignorance – and thereby putting the rest of humanity at risk.

6) Support for Democratic Forms of Government. Reject Authoritarianism.

7) Support for a Substantive Worldwide Discussion of how humanity is going to address the challenge of massive “unemployment” in the rapidly emerging technological/robotic/artificial intelligence global economy.

GENERAL STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

1) Educate with facts. Hard core extreme believers will deny the facts, but most humans are in the center and are persuadable. Progressives make the mistake of assuming that the facts are out there and citizens are responsible to know them. WRONG! Most citizens are too busy to “bother,” and so they rely on the opinions of others, whether parents or colleagues or friends or media/internet sources. The progressive agenda must focus on educating the adaptable center of the population – at all levels.

2) Let the facts speak for themselves. Do not draw the broader conclusions directly or immediately; that is too confrontational. Repetition over time of the key facts on any issue is the avenue to success. Facts, examples and benefits; facts, examples and benefits. Make the case with tangibles. The conclusions

will emerge!

- 3) Announcing most high order policy positions per se is not effective. Promoting “Equality” or “Civil Rights” or “Better Education” may sound good, but they are too general to provide any “grip.” Drop down a notch or two and get to specifics.
- 4) Identify the “how” of it. The announced goal may be lofty and desirable, but how do we get there, especially how are the claimed benefits financed? Where do the resources come from?
- 5) Self-Interest is a strong determinant. If citizens see themselves as taking a tax hit in order to receive a projected future benefit, support will be more difficult to obtain. Identify the difference between what may be a short term expense in order to obtain a long term benefit.
- 6) Expose the anti-government fallacy. “You are the government; do you dislike/reject yourself?” 3-5% of Americans make the difference in federal elections. 42% of eligible voters do not bother to vote. You need to be one of the Americans that do vote and that do change the situation for the better.
- 7) All proposals have pluses and minuses. Know BOTH, and be able to show how the pluses outweigh the minuses for what is being proposed.
- 8) Communicate clearly, as simply as possible, and with humor and a personal contact touch.
- 9) Language!! Keep the banner under which we operate [language and logo] simple and positive.
- 10) Avoid attacking opponents; instead, challenge the validity or completeness of their facts and the failings in their justifications for their conclusions.
- 11) Expose the fallacy in the “socialism” label. All government sponsored and/or run social services and facilities from police to public highways to public education are socialistic in nature. Socialism is a continuum, and Progressives are not proposing government ownership of private property, commercial production, or financial institutions. But experience among developed nations shows that some social services are most effectively and efficiently delivered by government at different levels. Government regulation helps prevent social and economic inequality and environmental degradation. Appropriate balance in the relationship of government and private enterprise is the key. Neither thoughtless deregulation nor excessive government intervention is the answer. [The one most recent example to keep in mind is the Great Recession which occurred when the Banks were uncritically deregulated with the result that the Financial Industry arose and developed obscure financial instruments designed to serve its own avaricious ends and neither the needs of the public nor of the commercial sector – putting the entire American and world economy at risk of failure.]