

Where I Went Last Week.....And Why Aretha Wasn't There

I try not to label the political direction in which I usually bend. I try to stay in the middle but I have to plead guilty to leaning a bit left on many things, although I prefer that to be called progressive (whatever that is really supposed to mean).

I don't watch a lot of TV news, and usually it is limited to the PBS Newshour. That program may seem to lean left sometimes but at least it spends a lot of time on the big issues and allows both sides to present their case in a setting where shouting is not allowed. I don't watch MSNBC, because I pretty much know what they are going to say. I do try to watch Fox News, however, as I do not know what is going to be said on those programs, and I know that millions of people are hearing it. So it is not uncommon for me to be tuning in to hear Bill and Megyn.

I do a similar thing here in DC, where the opportunity to hear different people from different groups on any given day is always there. So last week I went to a daylong event on Energy and Climate put on by the Heritage Foundation showcasing their policy platform in these areas. Heritage is often called (and perhaps self-described as) the leading arch-conservative think tank in the U.S. By most accounts (and by my interpretation at this event) they are one of the key

groups that the incoming administration is relying on for ideas and policy proposals.

The first thing that was evident was the virtual high-fiving going on. That is understandable. The Heritage folks, as with the rest of us, did not think that their guy would win. So they deserve to feel pretty good about what actually happened. The second thing was the clear alignment between Heritage and the Chairmen of the House Energy and Power Subcommittee and the House Science Committee, both of whom were speakers at the event along with other notables from the Hill.

But beyond that, some of the other things that happened were less understandable or at least not something I was happy to hear. They fall into two categories.

The first is science. One panel was comprised of five scientists, all of whom clearly fall within the 3% of scientists that are on the other side of the scale from the 97% of climate scientists who say that human influence is going to cause severe climate changes if not addressed. Among the comments from the scientists on the panel were these:

- CO₂ is what you all are breathing out in this room we are in, so how can it be a pollutant?
- Plants thrive on CO₂, and so we should be looking at increased CO₂ as something that

will increase crop yields and is therefore a good thing.

- I guarantee you that no one will ever experience a temperature increase from climate change in one's lifetime.

The second category, and the one that I really want to comment on, is the overall lack of respect threaded through the comments of speakers for anyone on the other side of the issues being discussed. The speakers throughout the day seemed to take every opportunity to verbally trash the side that lost in the election. As many say in today's slang, they seriously "disrespected" the other side.

But guess what - that is also what the other side does. I have been at plenty of events, and in plenty of conversations, where the progressive/left talks the same way about their policy and political opponents. There is a complete lack of that thing that Ms. Franklin's song causes us to sing about, regardless of which side we are on.

Given that each side seems to think it is completely right and that the "others" are completely wrong, we have set the stage where, as the famous line from an old movie goes "we have a failure to communicate". Communication has ceased being a two-way exercise. It has become talking, and not listening, whether it is to scientists and experts or someone from the other political persuasion. There is

no conversation happening.

In my opinion, the party that is in position to turn things back to conservation is the winning party and the party in control. Why? Because they, in the words of a former President, can be the "decider". When you have the power to make a decision, you have the power to listen and converse to those who don't share your stance. Maybe you will learn something or maybe they will, or maybe you both will. But the bottom line is that you are the decider.

So when it comes to clean energy, climate change, energy markets, DER, grid modernization, energy resources, and the other things that we as an electricity sector care about, let's hope that we have a new administration that doesn't just take actions that seemed right at some other point in time and but yet may not fit the present situation. We are watching our sector transform before our very eyes to become cleaner, more efficient and more reliable. We are seeing new and better jobs be created, even if not in the places where the old jobs are being lost. But we also know that in our sector, even with the speed-up of grid modernization, things still move relatively slowly, whether it is with emissions reductions or replacement of capital assets, and we know that decisions can be long lasting. If those decisions result from that are based on the system we are emerging from, and not the one we are entering into, that will not be good for any of us, and good for country.

So I urge us all - but particularly the winners - to take a walk with "the others" and hear what they have to say. Don't stay in your own silo. Be informed. You may still disagree with the other side and you may need to come out fighting at some point against something that is not fact-based or damaging to the things you care about. But there is too much at stake with our sector's progress and with the advance of climate change to not think out of the box a bit when it comes to conversation and to see if we can dredge up a little bit of respect - something that I thought used to be a key part of normalcy.

Think about that, as we all get ready for 2017.

Best wishes,

Dan

Dan is the President of Wedgemere Group. Follow him on Twitter [@dandelurey](https://twitter.com/dandelurey).
