



Alice in Liberal Land

If Alice could visit the world of liberal rhetoric and assumptions today, she might find similarly illogical and bizarre thinking. But people suffering in the current economy might not find it nearly as entertaining as *Alice in Wonderland*.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the world envisioned by today's liberals is that it is a world where other people just passively accept whatever "change" liberals impose. In the world of Liberal Land, you can just take for granted all the benefits of the existing society, and then simply tack on your new, wonderful ideas that will make things better.



For example, if the economy is going along well and you happen to take a notion that there ought to be more home ownership, especially among the poor and minorities, then you simply have the government decree that lenders have to lend to more low-income people and minorities who want mortgages, ending finicky mortgage standards about down payments, income and credit histories.

That sounds like a fine idea in the world of Liberal Land. Unfortunately, in the ugly world of reality, it turned out to be a financial disaster, from which the economy has still not yet recovered. Nor have the poor and minorities.

Apparently you cannot just tack on your pet notions to whatever already exists, without repercussions spreading throughout the whole economy. That's what happens in the ugly world of reality, as distinguished from the beautiful world of Liberal Land.

The strange and bizarre characters found in *Alice in Wonderland* have counterparts in the political vision of Liberal Land today. Among the most interesting of these characters are those elites who are convinced that they are so much smarter than the rest of us that they feel both a right and a duty to take all sorts of decisions out of our incompetent hands — for our own good.

In San Francisco, which is Liberal Land personified, there have been attempts to ban the circumcision of newborn baby boys. Fortunately, that was nipped in the bud. But it shows how widely the self-anointed saviors of Liberal Land feel entitled to take decisions out of the hands of mere ordinary citizens.

Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner says, "We're facing a very consequential debate about some fundamental choices as a country." People talk that way in Liberal Land. Moreover, such statements pass muster with those who simply take in the words, decide whether they sound nice to them, and then move on.

But, if you take words seriously, the more fundamental question is whether individuals are to remain free to make their own choices, as distinguished from having collectivized choices, "as a country" — which is to say, having choices made by government officials and imposed on the rest of us.



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on November 22, 2011

The history of the 20th century is a painful lesson on what happens when collective choices replace individual choices. Even leaving aside the chilling history of totalitarianism in the 20th century, the history of economic central planning shows it to have been such a widely recognized disaster that even communist and socialist governments were abandoning it as the century ended.

Making choices “as a country” cannot be avoided in some cases, such as elections or referenda. But that is very different from saying that decisions in general should be made “as a country” — which boils down to having people like Timothy Geithner taking more and more decisions out of our own hands and imposing their will on the rest of us. That way lies madness exceeding anything done by the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*.

That way lie unfunded mandates, nanny state interventions in people’s lives, such as banning circumcision — and the ultimate nanny state monstrosity, ObamaCare.

The world of reality has its problems, so it is understandable that some people want to escape to a different world, where you can talk lofty talk and forget about ugly realities like costs and repercussions. The world of reality is not nearly as lovely as the world of Liberal Land. No wonder so many people want to go there.

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