

“Exchange of letters with editor: Who is a Conservative?”
Milton Friedman and Adam Meyerson
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Dear Sir:

In your symposium “Serfdom USA,” you say, “Hayek’s *Road*, and his later works such as *The Constitution of Liberty* and *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, are the most influential books in modern conservatism,” yet Hayek added a postscript to *The Constitution of Liberty* entitled “Why I Am Not a Conservative.”

Was Hayek wrong on his self-designation, but right on everything else?

Milton Friedman

Dear Professor Friedman:

Both Hayek and I are correct. Hayek was not a conservative at the time. It is precisely because he has been so influential in modern conservatism that he can be considered a conservative today.

Adam Meyerson
Editor

Dear Adam:

Pure evasion. Hayek, to the best of my belief, like myself, always considered himself a “whig”—a 19th century liberal, never a conservative. Was he really a conservative in the same sense that Buchanan, Bennett, Kirk, let alone Rothbard, are or profess to be a conservative? You do him no service by regarding him as so.

Milton Friedman

Dear Professor Friedman:

You are a conservative too. Sorry.

By the way, Hayek made it clear in “Why I am not a Conservative,” that his quarrel was with European conservatives, not American ones. Hayek also considered himself in the same “liberal” tradition as Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville.

Adam Meyerson

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