

The Hot Dog

By Thomas R. Cuba

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On Memorial Day, I found myself watching Watters' World and chuckling about the latest bit of insanity that he'd managed to document: The status of the Hot Dog. Mr. Watters was out and about asking people on the street whether or not they considered the hot dog to be a sandwich. Apparently, Merriam-Webster listed it as such and some people were upset, refusing to put the iconic Memorial Day treat into the same category as chicken salad tucked between two pieces of toast.

To help resolve the issue, I asked my good friend and Presidential Candidate Madison Thompson for the answer to the question.

"Is the hot dog a sandwich?" I asked.

Madison replied, "No. The hot dog is a type of sausage at best. It can be served alone on a bun with all sorts of additives like chili and onions, or it can be sliced in half, covered with cheese and condiments, and served between two pieces of bread (usually 2 hot dogs per this arrangement). It can be cut up and put into casseroles, stews, or soups. Miniature ones are often smothered in sauce and served as appetizers or added to large pots of beans and served as a country stew."

I grinned at Madison's reply, for once again, he had sliced through confusion and provided a solid foundation for his opinion. But he went on.

"It's interesting that you ask."

"How so?" I inquired.

"I saw that piece by Watters too and see that the kind of question asked reflects the source of a lot of the confusion that we see in society today. What Watters did, probably unwittingly, was to accept the redefinition of the hot dog sausage, visualizing the hot dog on the bun instead. The redefinition of terms has led to all sorts of arguments. Democracy has been redefined as has the word anarchy. Today's self-proclaimed anarchist is no longer the chaos-loving sovereign citizen of the past, but just someone who prefers a stateless society to an overly regulated one. Of course the term stateless society is the new word for 'tribal' society. Health Care really means Health Insurance. Consensus no longer mean unanimous, but conveys a loosely defined and uncounted majority opinion of the members of the group."

I wanted to ask a question, but he went on, as politicians sometimes do.

"We also find that language can split our society on inferred, but unsubstantiated, grounds. Big rich guys take advantage of tax loopholes while middle America takes advantage of itemized deductions, like your mortgage interest. In fact, the mortgage deduction is a middle-income loophole. Still, one is considered bad, and the other, an entitlement."

He paused to take a breath, but held up a finger, indicating that he still wasn't finished.

"Let's go back to the hot dog. The image of the hot dog snuggled in a bun is the result of associative reasoning, not definitive, deductive, derivative, nor rational thought. It's sort of a verbal Rorschach test. Associative thought is imprecise and emotionally based, thereby making it not only inaccurate, but capable of having different meanings to those with differing emotional involvement."

Finally, he concluded.

"One cannot have productive discussion and debate on either a hot dog or the future of America under those conditions."

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