

When "Ideologues" Are "Moderates"

A Blog Entry in Comments From Left Field & GordonTalk

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A funny thing happened on the way to the confirmation hearings: Supreme Court nominee John Roberts has undergone "an extreme makeover" ... without ever changing an iota.

Sound incredible?

Well, just consider that when Roberts was nominated to replace the retiring Sandra Day O'Connor, who has earned the reputation as a "moderate conservative" ([CNN](#) etc.), the conventional wisdom was that Roberts was also a "moderate conservative" ([Reuters](#), [NPR](#), etc.). [Those controversial opinions he wrote or positions he took](#) were almost always those of the clients he represented, not necessarily his own; his unarguably meager "paper trail" did not allow the more broad-minded of us to form much of an opinion as to his own judicial philosophy (a deficiency, by the way, that doesn't strike me as a particularly compelling reason to appoint him to anything, let alone the highest court in the land).

But just a few weeks later, the conventional wisdom is that Roberts "appears to be an ideological twin" of the Chief Justice he is now nominated to replace ([Los Angeles Times](#)).

Indeed, we are "reminded" (introduced to the notion) of "the well-established image of Roberts

as a young lawyer whose positions on abortion, affirmative action, school prayer and more were in harmony with the conservative president he served," Ronald Reagan ([CNN](#)).

Hmm. Unless Googling "Rehnquist moderate conservative" or "Reagan moderate conservative" is not actually an oxymoronic exercise in futility, Roberts' public image of late has been subject to quite a bit of "evolution."

Or should I say "intelligent design"?