

ANYTHING PEACEFUL

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William A. Niskanen, RIP

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Bill Niskanen, an important Public Choice economist and long-time chairman of the Cato Institute, died earlier this week. I had the pleasure of having Bill as a colleague during my five years at Cato in the 1990s. He was unfailingly helpful and friendly, a fount of good sense in many ways. He was also supportive of me on more than one occasion. When I wrote a Cato Policy Analysis in May 1988, [“The Reagan Record on Trade: Rhetoric vs. Reality.”](#) indicting Ronald Reagan’s administration for its flagrant protectionism, despite Reagan’s stated admiration for Bastiat, Cobden, and Bright, Clayton Yeutter, the U.S. trade representative, complained to Bill accusing me of distorting the record. In his reply to Yeutter, Bill defended me, asserting that Reagan was the most protectionist president since Herbert Hoover, who of course signed the infamous Smoot-Hawley tariff.

It was an honor knowing Bill Niskanen. I know he will be missed.