



BUSINESS SCENE: Yankee Institute's free lunch the best in Central Connecticut

By: Scott Whipple- August 6, 2013

Last Wednesday, Jason Bedrick of the Cato Institute, spoke at the Milton Friedman Free Lunch at the Town & County Club in Hartford. Bedrick addressed a packed dining room — there must have been close to 300 in attendance — to discuss financial transparency and school choice. He explained which states are transparent about their public school spending and discussed scholarship tax credit programs and why Connecticut should adopt one.

A policy analyst with Cato's Center for Educational Freedom, Bedrick has extensive policy research experience, including detailed legislative development and analysis work. He previously served as a legislator in the New Hampshire House of Representatives and was a research fellow at the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, where he focused on state education policy.

Bedrick earned a master's degree in public policy, with a focus in education policy, from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His thesis, "Choosing to Learn," assessed the scholarship tax credit programs operating in eight states including their impact on student performance, fiscal impact, program design and popularity.

The theme of the luncheon was Friedman's observation that there is no free lunch. Yet, every year the Yankee Institute, a bastion of libertarianism, hosts the best free lunch in Central Connecticut.

It's not only the speakers, it's the attendees — from country club Republicans to Reagan conservatives. It was a treat to see Justin Bernier again, this time not running for anything, just relaxed and talking about his job as financial adviser for Morgan Stanley in Hartford.

Ask him if he will ever run again and a sly grin crosses his lips.

"No," he says. "I have a wife and a family to support." I suspect the political nail in Bernier's coffin in 2012 was when Mark Greenberg released his delegates at the convention to Andrew Roraback. A conservative Republican in Connecticut has about as much chance at the polls as Rand Paul getting a Standing O at a union convention.

It was wonderful shaking hands with Robert Steele again. Steele, former Republican Congressman, son of radio legend Bob Steele, has written a novel, "The Curse." It's about what happens to a small New England town seduced by big-time gambling. One reviewer called the novel "compelling and timely ... will make you wonder where America is headed." Sounds like Steele might have used Ledyard for a model.

Whenever I return to my alma mater, I sense the presence of Robert E. Lee on the campus. At the Yankee Institute there is the doppelganger of Friedman reminding us that "of course, none

of us is greedy; it's only the other fellow who's greedy. The world runs on individuals pursuing their separate interests. The great achievements have not come from government bureaus. Einstein didn't construct his theory under order from a bureaucrat. Henry Ford didn't revolutionize the automobile industry that way ... the only cases in recorded history are where they have had capitalism and largely free trade."