

The Washington Post

Stephen Moore is the cure, not a symptom

By Jennifer Rubin, Updated: February 24 at 11:30 am

The New York Times has finally caught up with the story many in the conservative media (and to its credit the New Republic) have been covering: the degeneration of Heritage Foundation into an adjunct of the right-wing Heritage Action attack machine. Well, better late than never, I suppose. That said, the Times gets one thing entirely wrong: “The Heritage Foundation has recently brought on the economist Stephen Moore from The Wall Street Journal’s editorial page and Katrina Trinko from National Review, two hires known more for their advocacy journalism than their scholarship.”

I cannot speak to Trinko, but the Times completely misses the boat with regard to Stephen Moore. For starters, Moore is a respected economist. To begin with, back when Heritage was a respected think tank, Moore was a senior fellow and later went on to the Cato Institute. He was also senior economist of the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee. He’s been instrumental in crafting tax-reform policies for more than twenty years.

Aside from that, Moore is not an example of what is wrong with Heritage; he is an antidote. Current and former Heritage Foundation members confirm that Moore was sought out to help restore Heritage Foundation’s economic credentials and luster. He has an reputation for intellectual honesty and would not be one to meekly accept the sort of rubbish Heritage has been recently churning out (e.g. the anti-immigration “study” asserting Hispanics are intellectually inferior.) He has long been a principled defender of free trade and immigration reform, both essential components of a thriving free market. He may have to tread with care to avoid humiliating his employer, but I’d be shocked if he reversed long-held positions or compromised intellectual rigor.

I’ve been as dogged a critic of the Jim DeMint era at Heritage as anyone. But Heritage — or at least some segment of Heritage — should get credit for recognizing the problem of declining scholarship and hyper-politicization and finding a heavyweight free market economist to help salvage the once venerated think tank. On that, the Times missed the real story.