



Why Is the Cato Institute Getting into Bed with the Hard Left to Smear US History, Keep Our Borders Open, and Diminish American Power?

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The libertarian Cato Institute gets right down to it, in a New York Post op-ed titled, “Woodrow Wilson’s racism isn’t the only reason for Princeton to shun his name.” Yes, Cato went there. The libertarian outfit, which mostly seeks to identify with Republicans and conservatives on tax and spending issues, actually threw in with left-wing radical #BlackLivesMatter-type protesters on another important matter—defending the traditional understanding of US history. But as we shall see, the traditional understanding of US history means nothing to Cato.

In his Post op-ed, Cato’s executive vice president, David Boaz, was happy to repeat the now-familiar accusation that Wilson was a racist. Okay, so Wilson was. But he was also twice elected as president of the United States, in 1912 and 1916, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920, and, after he died in 1924, was buried with full honors at the Washington National Cathedral. So evidently, the people who knew him best had a high opinion of him.

In fact, maybe it’s kind of ridiculous to judge historical figures by the standards of our own time. That is, if we judge past heroes according to today’s politically correct benchmarks, not many will survive the scrutiny. After all, at least a dozen US presidents owned slaves. So if we start throwing politically incorrect presidents down the memory hole, will we take Andrew Jackson off the \$20 bill? Will we remove George Washington from the \$1 bill, as well as eliminate his name from the District of Columbia and Washington State?

Another of those slave-owning presidents, we might note, was Thomas Jefferson, whose image and spirit have adorned the Cato Institute since its founding in 1976.

In fact, Cato doesn't much care about civil rights and race relations; it's simply using the #BlackLivesMatter protestors as a convenient club with which to clobber Wilson, whom Cato hates for other reasons.

Hey, wait a minute, the reader might be saying. How do we know that Cato doesn't care about racism? How can Virgil be so sure?

We can start by noting that libertarians staunchly opposed the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act as an abridgment of freedom. And we're not just talking about old-school Ron Paul-types; even younger libertarians, such as Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), have denounced the 1964 legislation. One can say that Cato-type libertarians have a perfect right to their position on the Civil Rights Act, as indeed they do. But then they have no standing to criticize Wilson for his racial views.

As an aside, we might add that one needn't support any of the more recent excrescences of the civil rights movement, such as affirmative action and racial quotas, nonetheless to see the value—the essentiality—of nationwide equality before the law.

Yet the Cato crowd goes far beyond opposition to basic civil rights legislation; it goes all the way to a romanticization of the antebellum South as the pinnacle of freedom in US history. Yes, in the libertarian telling, there was slavery back then, but most Southerners weren't slaves, and the non-slaves, at least, enjoyed the limited-government joys of no government-funded infrastructure, no public education, and, best of all, no income tax. Yes, solid libertarians even lionize the old Confederacy.

We might observe that the professional Cato-type libertarian's love of the slaveholding South is not just an afterthought: It's a major plank in Cato-type thinking. For proof of that, we can return to another sentence from the Cato op-ed: "There's a reason that Ivan Eland rated Wilson last of all presidents...in his book *Recarving Rushmore*."

By way of introduction to Ivan Eland, we can note that he is a former Cato staffer, now at the likeminded Independent Institute. So of course, the Cato Man is all too happy to cite Eland as an expert in his anti-Wilson screed.

But we might ask: What does Eland argue in his 2009 book, *Recarving Rushmore*—as in Mt. Rushmore—which offers a sweeping reassessment of US history and its great presidents?

We can start by noticing that the four presidents who currently grace Mt. Rushmore—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt—are gone, all swept away in Eland's scorn.

In their place, Eland proposes a new quartet of "immortals": John Tyler, Grover Cleveland, Martin van Buren, and Rutherford B. Hayes. Most Americans, of course, would be hard-pressed to pick any of those four out of a lineup, let alone cite anything they accomplished in the White

House. Indeed, not doing much of anything is the common thread that unites the four—that's why Eland chose them.

Yet we might pause over the president who is clearly Eland's favorite: our Tenth President, John Tyler. Elected as vice president in 1840, Tyler succeeded William Henry Harrison, who died just a month after taking office, in 1841. Yet he was so unpopular in the White House that his own party refused to nominate him for a second term in 1844.

Whereupon, Tyler retired to his slave-plantation in Virginia. And then, two decades later, with the coming of the Civil War, he avidly supported the Confederacy. Tyler thus stands as the only president of the United States to have forsaken—some might prefer the verb “betrayed”—his country. And this is Cato's beau ideal of a statesman!

So once again, we see the Cato Institute's true colors on the issue of color. From the grave, Wilson, dead these nine decades, might taunt back at Cato, Takes one to know one!

Of course, Cato's true motivations for hating on Wilson become clear soon enough in the Post op-ed. Warming up to his Wilson-bashing, the Cato man writes, “He imposed the first income tax.” Actually, that's a bit misleading. Yes, Wilson supported the income tax, and yes, the tax was first collected during his presidency, but that tax was made possible by a previous president, William Howard Taft. The income tax, after all, was the result of the 16th Amendment, proposed by Taft in 1909. It was then passed by the constitutionally required two-thirds vote in Congress, and then ratified by three-fourths of the states. All of this happened in less than four years; on February 25, 1913, a week before Wilson was inaugurated as the 28th President, the Taft Administration announced that the ratification process was complete—the income tax was a reality. So Cato can inveigh against the income tax all it wants, but it's not accurate to pin it on Wilson.

Even more egregious is Cato's misrepresentation, in the same op-ed, of another of Wilson's supposed offenses, the Palmer Raids. Reference is made to, “the Red Scare and the notorious Palmer Raids, carried out by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919-20.”

Okay, so let's talk about the Palmer Raids. And when we've finished, the reader might ask, What would I have done if were Attorney General Palmer?

First, a little historical context:

The second decade of the 20th century was a scary time: The teens were witness to great terror in the world, much of it from three threatening “isms:” anarchism, communism, and imperialism.

On October 1, 1910, the headquarters of The Los Angeles Times was blown up by a bomb, killing 21 and injuring 100 more. Such bombings might seem glumly routine today, but they were a new and shocking phenomenon in those days.

Four years later, in 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife were shot and killed as they rode through the streets of Sarajevo, in what's now Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereby sparking World War One. What was then known as "The Great War" left some 18 million dead.

Then came the Russian Revolution in October 1917. As a nationwide civil war raged, Lenin and his Bolsheviks murdered Czar Nicholas II and his entire family in Siberia the following summer, in July 1918. Russia, which had been America's ally in World War I, had by then dropped out of the war against Germany, as the Bolsheviks preferred to wage war against religion and freedom at home. Indeed, Lenin & Co. brought a new kind of mass-murdering ruthlessness to the world, ushering in what became known as the Red Terror.

We might note that red communism wasn't just a problem in Russia. In 1918 and 1919, "Soviet" republics were declared in Germany and Hungary. Happily, they were short-lived.

Yet the radical threat was also inside our own borders. The Italian-born violent anarchist Luigi Galleani immigrated to the US in 1901; soon he organized a string of terror-cells. In 1914, Galleani's followers, known as Galleanists, exploded a bomb at John D. Rockefeller's estate in Tarrytown, NY. A short time later, they exploded another bomb at the New York City police headquarters. The following year, 1915, the NYPD uncovered a Galleanist plot to blow up St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Then, in 1916, a Chicago-based Galleanist used arsenic in an attempt to poison some 100 guests at a banquet honoring Archbishop Mundelein of Chicago. The year 1916 also saw bombings and attacks on police in Boston and San Francisco.

The Galleanist bombing campaign slowed down in 1917, with the onset of World War One, because many Galleanists left the US, mostly going to Mexico, to avoid the draft. Still, during the war, Galleanists exploded yet more bombs in Boston, Milwaukee, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.

The threat from anarchism was bad enough during those years. Yet the threat from German imperialism was greater, even when the US was still neutral in the Great War. In May 1915, a German U-boat torpedoed the passenger liner Lusitania, killing 1,198, including 128 Americans. observed here at Breitbart on December 3, the threat from Germany was dire:

As a result, the US had little choice but to join the war against the Kaiser's murderous international lawbreaking; if we hadn't, the sacred principle of freedom of navigation on the high seas would have been forfeited, and American power would have been severely diminished.

Yet even before the war started, the Germans weren't just sinking our ships, they were blowing up our ports. As Breitbart recalls:

In addition, during this period, Germany waged a covert sabotage campaign against the US; most spectacularly, on July 30, 1916, German agents blew up a port facility in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Honest people can still argue over the merits or de-merits of US entry into World War I. But for now, our task is simpler: to get back in the mindset of thoughtful Americans, in both parties, as they evaluated threats to the homeland in that era. The 65th Congress, controlled by the Democrats, enacted both the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Immigration Act of 1918. Those bills, quickly signed into law by President Wilson, toughened the penalties for spying and sabotage, as well as expediting the process of deporting unwanted aliens. Yes, these bills were mostly crafted by Democrats—albeit very different kinds of Democrats from what we have today.

Meanwhile, once the Great War was won, in November 1918, the terror-plague surged: The draft-dodging Galleanists, and their bombs, returned to America.

In April 1919, the Galleanists mailed some 36 dynamite-filled package-bombs to political, legal, and business leaders. Included in each package was a flyer declaring war on the capitalists in the name of the anarchist revolution.

Most of these package-bombs failed to reach their targets; some were even returned for insufficient postage. Sadly, one of them was opened by an African-American housekeeper, Ethel Williams, in the employ of Senator Thomas W. Hardwick (D-GA), a sponsor of the recent Immigration Act. Williams' hands were blown off and Hardwick's wife injured when the bomb exploded.

Two months later, in June 1919, the Galleanists exploded eight large bombs nearly simultaneously in different US cities.

Most notable among these latest targets was the attorney general of the United States, A. Mitchell Palmer. His home on R Street, NW, in DC was partly demolished, and a nightwatchman was killed.

Whereupon Palmer, himself a Quaker, decided that enough was enough. He resolved to crack down on the terror, aiming squarely at the Galleanists. He launched the so-called “Palmer Raids,” which the Cato op-ed characterized as “notorious.”

But the raids were so “notorious” that they worked—the terror wave subsided. Palmer, aided by an energetic and efficient 20-something, J. Edgar Hoover, broke the back of the Galleanist conspiracy. Galleani himself, along with eight others, was deported to Italy in June 1919.

The terrorists still had one major “victory,” though: On September 16, 1920, a bomb went off on Wall Street, right in front of the New York Stock Exchange, killing 38 and injuring 143.

But after that, the Palmer Raids were proven completely effective. The terror-fever had broken.

Indeed, the Palmer Raids were tough, no question about it. But as we have seen, those were tough times. And so again, we might ask ourselves: What would we have done?

And yet now, nearly a century later, we see that a major split had occurred, between the bulk of the country and the far left. Mainly, the average American in 1920 was just happy that the threat of anarchism, communism, and imperialism had abated. And so in the popular mind, the Palmer Raids were soon forgotten.

Yet over on the far left, the memory of the Palmer Raids has been kept alive, in an endless skein of articles, books, and even movies. Yes, the left, which never met a Red Scare that it didn't want to be part of, has used its powers of imagination to conjure up the image of the radicals of that era being harassed and oppressed by The Man. Typical of this sort of propaganda effort is the 1981 Hollywood film *Reds*, directed by, and starring, Warren Beatty. As one reviewer dutifully repeated, echoing the movie's left-wing message, "It is the period of the Red Scare with the Palmer raids with its arrests of American radicals simply for their being radicals."

Indeed, alleged victimization in the Palmer Raids is the founding myth of one of the most powerful institutions of the US left today, the American Civil Liberties Union. The founders of the ACLU were, in fact, pro-Soviet communists, but that inconvenient truth has been conveniently forgotten. Instead, today, the ACLU casts itself as the non-ideological but spunky underdog, standing up to the goliath of Uncle Sam. As the group declares:

In the years following World War I, America was gripped by the fear that the Communist Revolution that had taken place in Russia would spread to the United States. As is often the case when fear outweighs rational debate, civil liberties paid the price. In November 1919 and January 1920, in what notoriously became known as the "Palmer Raids," Attorney General Mitchell Palmer began rounding up and deporting so-called radicals. Thousands of people were arrested without warrants and without regard to constitutional protections against unlawful search and seizure. Those arrested were brutally treated and held in horrible conditions. In the face of these egregious civil liberties abuses, a small group of people decided to take a stand, and thus was born the American Civil Liberties Union.

In other words, nobody here in the henhouse but us civil libertarians! That's the Party Line of the ACLU, and ACLU-ers and their accomplices are sticking to it.

And now we can see that the ACLU and Cato have joined together, as they have so often in the past, on issues ranging from electronic communications, to border security, to Gang of Eight-style "comprehensive immigration reform. Yes, today, Cato and the ACLU are once on the same side of a critical issue. The ACLU has taken up the cause of letting Syrian refugees come here. And once again, Cato is right there with them: As Virgil noted on November 27 here at Breitbart:

The Cato Institute's A. Trevor Thrall wrote on November 23, "Paris Changed Nothing. We Still Have Every Reason to Welcome Syrian Refugees." And lest he be misunderstood, Thrall followed up two days later with this advice to Obama: "Dear Mr. President: It's Time to Ignore the Polls on Syrian Refugees."

Yes, the Cato Institute is so in bed with the far left that it's hard to know whose pillow is whose.

Yet if we can return to a key paragraph from the Cato op-ed, we might pause over one sentence in particular, in which Cato approvingly cites the work of one prominent academic. Quoth Cato:

Sociologist and historian James W. Loewen wrote, "Neither before nor since these campaigns has the United States come closer to being a police state."

So who, exactly, is James W. Loewen? Answer: He's a hard-ACLU-type leftist, who has devoted his life to a sort of Chomsky-esque recasting—maybe "smearing" is a better word—of American history in books with titles such as *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

To gain more insight into Loewen, we might glance at his Wikipedia page, which tells us, "For twenty years, Loewen taught about racism at the University of Vermont."

Want more evidence that Loewen is a hard-leftist? Okay. Here's how David Horowitz, himself a veteran of hard-left causes before he switched sides and became a conservative, characterizes Loewen's best known work, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*:

This book is not a scholarly work, but—as the title suggests—a sectarian polemic against the traditional teaching of American history and against what the author views as the black record of the American past. Among other harangues to be found in his text, Loewen laments "[h]ow textbooks misrepresent the U.S. government and omit its participation in state-sponsored terrorism."

According to Loewen, the lies teachers told him result from facts being "manipulated by elite white male capitalists who orchestrate how history is written."

So that's James Loewen—a hard, hard, America-bashing leftist. But to Cato, he's just another fine expert, helping it bash Wilson.

Thus we can see how Cato operates, in five steps.

First, it lines up with #BlackLivesMatter-type leftists to condemn Woodrow Wilson as a racist, and, by extension, all Americans who voted for him. We can recall that in the 1912 presidential election, Wilson carried 40 of 48 states, and in the 1916 election, he won 30 states; so chances are, the ancestors of most Americans living today are thereby condemned. As we have seen, the Cato types have a much stronger anti-civil rights record even than Wilson. (It was Wilson in 1913, not Cato, who praised the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg—a Union victory—as he

urged the survivors, blue and gray, at a 50th anniversary reunion of the battle to work together to make a united America a better place.)

Second, Cato relentlessly distorts US history, as we saw in its attempt to blame Wilson for the income tax.

Third, Cato happily and opportunistically invokes the left-wing likes of James Loewen.

Fourth, it lines up with its soulmates at the ACLU to malign legitimate efforts at homeland security. And for this, we can ask in wonder, Why does Cato get so much money from billionaires such as the Koch Brothers? Don't the Kochs understand that they, and all of us, are better off without bomb-throwing anarchists on the loose? Yet, all its slipshod "scholarship" notwithstanding, Cato gets a charitable tax deduction, which means that the rest of us are, in effect, chipping in for its historical malpractice.

But there's a fifth item, which is clearly the strongest animating force for Cato's anti-Wilson venom. In Cato's telling, Wilson's biggest "crime" was US entry into World War I. As Cato puts it, "Most notably, President Wilson led the United States into an unnecessary and disastrous war." And then Cato quotes someone—the speaker is glibly not identified—labeling it as "probably history's worst catastrophe." So take a back seat, Black Plague, Soviet communist purges, World War Two and the Holocaust, and the Khmer Rouge: You've been demoted by the experts at Cato.

As Cato says of American intervention, "US involvement turned a central European conflict into a world war." In other words, the think-tank would have the casual reader believe that World War I was just a fight between, say, East Ruritania and West Ruritania, somewhere in Mittel Europa. But in fact, at the very onset of World War I, on August 4, 1914, the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium, their armies plowing through the little country, on their way to invading France, committing heinous war crimes along the way. By the end of August, German armies were at the Atlantic coast.

Thus the Germans threatened not only Britain—which entered the war, mostly to help Belgium, in 1914—but also the United States, which entered three years later. Yes, the Germans, high on their own Teutonic sense of superiority, were striving for Weltmacht—world power.

As recorded recently for Breitbart:

We can see that Wilson, at that time, had no real choice but to go to war against Germany in 1917.

Most historians agree that US entry into the war began with the sinking of the passenger liner Lusitania, torpedoed by a German U-boat off the south coast of Ireland in May 1915, killing 1,198, including 128 Americans. In the uproar that followed, the Germans, fearful of provoking the US into war, agreed to cease their policy of "unrestricted" submarine warfare—that is,

sinking any ship, armed or not, neutral or not, that came near its enemy, Great Britain. But that restrictive policy lasted only briefly; in February 1917, the Germans returned to “unrestrictive” submarine warfare. As a result, the US had little choice but to join the war against the Kaiser’s murderous international lawbreaking; if we hadn’t, the sacred principle of freedom of navigation on the high seas would have been forfeited, and American power would have been severely diminished.

Yes, if we hadn’t gone to war when we had to, American power would have been crippled. But of course, the libertarian isolationists at Cato don’t care about any of that. Indeed, it’s fair to say, they would welcome the permanent crippling of American power.

Woodrow Wilson made plenty of mistakes as president. As has been argued, Wilson’s presidency can be regarded as a failure, albeit a nobly tragic failure.

Yet in their ideologically extreme zeal to discredit Wilson, the Cato-ites are all too willing to embrace even scurrilous leftists such as #BlackLivesMatter, James Loewen, and the ACLU.

And so the rest of us might fairly conclude: If those are Wilson’s enemies, then maybe the 28th President wasn’t so bad.