

AMSPECBLOG**Taking Liberties**

By W. James Antle, III on 12.28.10 @ 9:06AM

Sometimes I feel a little guilty about my chosen profession. Wading through Christopher Beam's long essay on libertarianism is one of those times. *New York* magazine gave him many words and who knows how many dollars to write an article that doesn't say much more than: Libertarianism is a big deal because there is exactly one congressman and one senator who are libertarians, more or less. And because conservatives are talking about shrinking government while liberals are talking about not liking wars or civil liberties violations. And because of the Founding Fathers. And because Will Wilkinson has a blog.

But then what Beam giveth, Beam taketh away: Conservatives won't really shrink the government. Lots of people tell pollsters they don't mind being groped by the TSA. Some people at the Cato Institute didn't like Will Wilkinson's blog or Brink Lindsey's book, and they don't work there anymore. Pat Buchanan wrote a book critical of World War II. And, like, what would happen if all the people who could be on welfare can't be taken care of by private charities?

To be fair, the piece does contain some discussion of libertarianism and its factions that might be news to readers of mainstream magazines like *New York*. Libertarians have had a hard time convincing the public they are right when confronted with some of the basic counterarguments Beam offers. Finally, I'm not a libertarian purist myself.

Yet somehow, I doubt *New York* would give me comparable space to write an essay critical of liberalism that amounted to little more than: Bernie Sanders is in the Senate. We have a national health care plan. Jane Hamsher has a blog. Gee whiz, what would happen if taxes got too high?

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