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## [A Purge at the Cato Institute?](#)

Posted Monday, August 23, 2010 2:05 PM | By [David Weigel](#)

The libertarian Cato Institute is parting with two of its most prominent scholars. Brink Lindsey, the institute's vice president of research and the author of the successful book *The Age of Abundance*, is departing to take a position at the Kauffman Foundation. Will Wilkinson, a Cato scholar, collaborator with Lindsey, and editor of the online Cato Unbound, is [leaving on September 15](#); he just began blogging politics for the *Economist*.

I asked for comment on this and was told that the institute does not typically comment on personnel matters. But you have to struggle not to see a political context to this. Lindsey and Wilkinson are among the Cato scholars who most often find common cause with liberals. In 2006, after the GOP lost Congress, Lindsey [coined the term](#) "Libertarians" to suggest that Libertarians and liberals could work together outside of the conservative movement. Shortly after this, he launched a dinner series where liberals and Libertarians met to discuss big ideas. (Disclosure: I attended some of these dinners.) In 2009 and 2010, as the libertarian movement moved back into the right's fold, Lindsey remained iconoclastic—just last month [he penned a rare](#), biting criticism of *The Battle*, a book by AEI President Arthur Brooks which argues that economic theory is at the center of a new American culture war.

Did any of this play a role in the departure of Lindsey and Wilkinson? I've asked Lindsey and Wilkinson, and Wilkinson has declined to talk about it, which makes perfect sense. But I'm noticing Libertarians on Twitter starting to deride this move and intimate that Cato is enforcing a sort of orthodoxy. (The title of Wilkinson's kiss-off post, "The Libertarian Diaspora," certainly hints at something.)

UPDATE: Here's the e-mail that went out to staff from Cato's Ed Crane.

*Catoites,*

*As you may by now have heard, our longtime colleague and friend Brink Lindsey has accepted a senior position at the Kansas City-based Kauffman Foundation. He will be a senior fellow in research and policy. The good news is that he will be working here in Washington with, among others, our old friend Bob Litan (formerly with Brookings). Brink has made many meaningful contributions to Cato over the nearly two decades he has worked here, not least of which include the establishment of our Center for Trade Policy Studies and our online Cato Unbound. This looks to be a terrific opportunity for Brink. Please join me in thanking him for his contributions to Cato and wishing him well in his new endeavor.*

*Ed*

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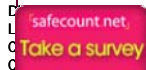
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