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[Libertarians and Cato, Continued](#)

Posted Tuesday, August 24, 2010 10:19 AM | By [David Weigel](#)

Yesterday's post about the departure of Cato Institute scholars Will Wilkinson and Brink Lindsey generated a good amount of analysis, including [some smart skepticism from Ilya Somin](#):

[I]t is strange to claim that Cato got rid of Lindsey for promoting a political alliance with the left at the very time when Lindsey himself [recently disavowed that very idea](#), stating that "it's clear enough that for now and the foreseeable future, the left is no more viable a home for libertarians than is the right." If Cato objected to Lindsey's advocacy of an alliance with the left, one would think they would have purged him back when he was actually advocating it, not after he has repudiated it. Wilkinson does still favor libertarianism, but apparently only as a philosophical dialogue. He [holds out little if any prospect of an actual political coalition between the two groups](#).

The first thing we need to realize here is that organizations don't typically open up about why employees leave. Remember that David Frum, when [first asked by Greg Sargent](#) about his departure from AEI, said that he'd been told that it had "nothing to do" with his work. That's not what we know now. And the only statement either of the departing Cato scholars has made has been Wilkinson's "psst, read between the lines" post on the "Libertarian diaspora." I suppose that the people convinced that politics played *no role* in Lindsey and Wilkinson's departures also think that departing government officials really, really just enjoy spending more time with their families.

Was my word "purge" a little harsh? Well, I don't think Cato is about to get rid of all of the scholars who agree with liberals on the issues they research, just as AEI is not about to send Norm Ornstein to Room 101. It's just that Cato is losing the two scholars most invested in the "libertarian" project, and this is inspiring some [smart commentary](#) about what that idea, birthed after the 2006 elections, means right now.

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