

The New York Times

The Conscience of a Liberal

Paul Krugman

MAY 27, 2009, 11:10 AM

Center for American Regress?

Douglas Holtz-Eakin wants a [conservative version](#) of the Center for American Progress. But as [Matt Yglesias](#) points out, there are plenty of think tanks on the right, funded at levels beyond the left's wildest dreams. If CAP is running rings around right-wing think tanks intellectually — which it is — it's not due to a lack of institutions or funding.

So what's the right's problem? That's easy: conservative think tanks are short of new ideas because new ideas were the last thing the billionaire funders of those institutions wanted. What they wanted, and still want, is validation of their prejudices; if someone at a right wing think tank forgets the nature of his job and actually, you know, does some independent thinking, he [quickly gets fired](#).

A footnote: does anyone remember [this](#)?

In his latest column, the Washington Post's David Broder extols the virtues of the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, two of the nation's most powerful and influential think tanks, on their 25th anniversaries. He writes that their "usefulness in Washington politics stems from their intellectual honesty and their willingness to question conventional wisdom, even when their friends are in power."