

Posted on February 23, 2010 4:56 AM

## Speaker: Poverty issue in Haiti quake

By **Marilyn Perez**   
*Collegian Staff Writer*

A lack of wealth in Haiti is what Tom G. Palmer said caused the overwhelming amount of more than 200,000 fatalities after the earthquake last month.

Palmer, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, spoke to an audience of about 20 people at 7 p.m. Monday night in 101 Thomas Building. Many attendees were members of the Penn State Libertarians.

Palmer said a wealthy country could be achieved by changing its institutions. He pointed out other earthquakes with a similar 7.0 magnitude. The notable, drastic difference between the others and the earthquake in Haiti was the amount of fatalities.

One of the others was the Loma Prieta Earthquake, commonly known as the World Series Earthquake. It took place in San Francisco in 1989 and had a magnitude of about 7.0, he said. The amount of fatalities was 63.

"What Haiti needs is different institutions," he said. "It's the difference between 63 fatalities and Haiti's 200,000."

Member of the Libertarians, James McAndrew (senior-economics) said Palmer's points were entirely valid.

Palmer asked a myriad of questions to get his points across.

"Why does wealth matter? Doesn't wealth let you have iPods and go on vacations?" said Palmer. "Wealth is building better houses. It's more resilience in a society."

Alumnus Tom Shakely said the theory that Haiti's lack of wealth is what caused the suffering is a provocative economic theory.

"From my perspective, it's because it's out of the norm that it's worth listening to," Shakely said. "It was well-argued, and to the extent I understood, I agree."

Poverty is a natural occurrence, Palmer said, adding that the anomaly in global economic development is the upward trend of per capita in the world.

The upward trend can be accounted for in a country's institutions, he said.

"The world is not ruled by wishes," Palmer said. "We can all wish Haiti was richer, but unless you

change institutions, it will stay the same."

Palmer said one of his concerns is that the United States will end up staying in Haiti for longer than is necessary.

Shakely said he thinks it's not the job of the U.S. government to run other countries.

"It's important to distinguish between emergency aid and long-term development," Shakely said. "If it's taken us a decade in Afghanistan and a decade in Iraq, it seems likely the same could happen in Haiti."

paid advertising

Save Now  
with Coupon Codes  
that **Actually Work!**

Search for a Store, Brand or Deal

savings.com

Search

Copyright © 2010 Collegian Inc., 123 S. Burrowes St., University Park, Pa.