

## August 23, 2010

### Weigel: Is Cato Purging Their Liberal Bridge-Builders?

#### Updates below

Dave Weigel [suggests](#) today that the Cato Institute may be attempting to codify a libertarian orthodoxy by letting go of two of its well-known scholars, Brink Lindsey and Will Wilkinson.

The likeness?

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 "Liberalartarians" 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.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I [suggested](#) that some of the most interesting and rigorous debate in Washington was happening in libertarian circles.

Was I wrong?

I'll keep an eye on reports and do a little digging myself. Updates to come.

**Update:** A Cato spokesperson responded to my inquiries by forwarding the email from Cato's founder and president, [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

The Cato representative confirmed Will Wilkinson's departure, but also said Crane has not yet offered a statement because he is traveling overseas--and that there is "little doubt that he would (or will) have similarly warm things to say about Will's contributions to both Cato and to the libertarian cause in general."