



Eye on the Right

Well-funded right-wing think tanks have succeeded in shaping the nation's political debate for decades. Eye on the Right casts a critical look at the arguments and agendas these organizations peddled in 2008—ideas all too likely to become the conservative marching orders of 2009.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute

Competitive Enterprise Institute fellow Steven J. Milloy is quick to decry what he regards as fear-mongering by environmentalists, but he's perfected the technique himself. "The lights may soon go out in Washington, D.C.," he warns ominously in one article, "And it could happen where you live too." Your electricity is in danger, Milloy writes, because of environmentalists who want to conserve energy before building more coal-fired power plants. "Environmental zealots," Milloy explains, want to "continue their anti-energy jihad against essentially defenseless coal-based electricity producers." Milloy comes to

the rescue of the poor vulnerable coal industry by suggesting that they deny the scientific consensus on human-induced global warming all together. After all, that's what he and his \$3 million organization do, with generous support from the oil industry. Of course, there's no evidence that anyone has actually faced a blackout caused by environmental activism. What's more, coal-fired power plants present human health risks beyond the carbon emissions that contribute to global warming; its toxic mercury emissions can lead to brain damage and nervous system disabilities among adults, children, and developing fetuses. But that's another fact to obfuscate another day.

The American Enterprise Institute

Landlord trying to illegally evict you? Abusive ex-spouse about to get custody of the kids? You need a lawyer—*fast*. But if you can't afford to pay out-of-pocket, and your case isn't potentially lucrative enough to hire representation on a contingency basis, you may be out of luck. Legal aid programs are too under-funded to meet the need. So every day, Americans with important claims related to their health, housing, sustenance, child custody, and safety are forced to go to court without legal counsel; frequently, they lose their case. Don't worry, says the American Enterprise Institute, those people are probably liars who are unworthy of representation anyway. AEI Resident Fellow Ted Frank argues that providing access to a lawyer to low-income people in important legal matters—a right that is also called *Civil Gideon*—is a “socially wasteful proposal” that would make it difficult for judges to determine who “is not one of the liars” (apparently, he means those rich enough to pay a lawyer). Worst of all, according to Frank, *Civil Gideon* could provide elderly tenants free legal help to avoid eviction. If that happened, these low-income seniors might be encouraged “to intentionally refuse to pay rent.” With annual revenues of \$28.4 million, AEI has no problem making rent, or hiring lawyers for that matter. Too bad they use those resources to prevent the rest of us from attaining justice.

The Heritage Foundation

“Has all the focus on expanding young women's educational and professional horizons obscured their path to the married life they dream of?” frets the Heritage Foundation's Director of Domestic Policy Studies, Jennifer A. Marshall. While it's easy for young women to become rocket scientists, according to Marshall, girls need to understand more about how to become good wives and mothers. While ostensibly talking about issues of work-life balance and how “some [career] dreams come with conditions,” in the form of delayed marriage and

parenthood, Marshall shows no interest in extending these lessons to young men. Public policies like paid family leave and universal preschool that the rest of the world uses to make it easier for parents to balance work and family also go unmentioned. Instead, “girls need more encouragement to develop this character of self-sacrifice...” Now celebrating its 35th birthday, the Heritage Foundation enjoys a \$43.6 million annual budget to promote its successful agenda of deregulation, tax cuts, hawkish foreign policy and, yes, shockingly retrograde messages for young women.

The Hoover Institution

The Hoover Institution's endowment may have grown to \$437 million, but the ideas of Herbert Hoover never go out of fashion at the think tank he founded. Hoover Institution fellow John F. Cogan teams up with American Enterprise Institute fellow R. Glenn Hubbard to insist that in the midst of economic turmoil, the nation must both balance the budget and retain the staggeringly costly Bush tax cuts. In a *Wall Street Journal* editorial in April, Hubbard and Cogan warn of the horrors to come if the Bush tax cuts are not

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extended. “Taxes would choke off the [economic] recovery,” they insist without evidence. But most upsetting, if tax cuts expire “the promise of higher revenues would encourage Congress to continue its profligate spending.” Which spending is that? The giveaway is that the authors define *any* spending growth not for defense or homeland security as “excess.” Sure, retaining the tax cuts while balancing the budget would require the nation to “change entitlements to slow their cost growth”—a slick way of advocating cuts in our Social Security benefits—but don't worry: “increasing the size of the Defense Department's procurement budget by 25 percent... would add just 0.1 percent to annual federal spending.”



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The Center for Immigration Studies

The name may sound impartial and even academic, but the Center for Immigration Studies is anything but. True, this anti-immigrant organization uses less hateful and inflammatory rhetoric than many of its counterparts, but the overall goal remains the same: terminating virtually all immigration, legal or otherwise, to the United States. Scratch the surface of the studiously objective language and some familiar right-wing preoccupations with race and culture turn up quickly. In an essay in the *National Review Online*, for example, CIS Executive Director Mark Krikorian excoriates GOP presidential nominee John McCain for being “an ideological multiculturalist.” Krikorian argues that McCain has not flip-flopped convincingly enough. Because McCain opposed English-only ballot initiatives, supported bilingual education programs for students learning English, and has not taken a hard line against affirmative action in Arizona he “strike[s] at the coherence of the American nation.” What’s more, McCain dares to have more evolved views on American identity than Theodore Roosevelt expressed in 1918. The Center for Immigration Studies boasts of being “the nation’s only think tank devoted exclusively” to immigration, but gratuitous attacks on McCain’s “liberal stances” on global warming and judges suggest a far broader right-wing agenda.

The Cato Institute

You might imagine that the meltdown of the nation’s financial sector would have prompted some soul-searching in the halls of this libertarian think tank. After all, the consequences of the deregulation and lack of public oversight that Cato has spent decades advocating for are devastating the American economy. Right? Not so, says Cato. It isn’t lax regulation of irresponsible lenders that brought down the economy, but “planners trying to socially engineer our cities.” That’s right: zoning ordinances caused the financial crisis. In an essay with the uncompromising title “Why Government Planning Always Fails,”

Cato’s Senior Fellow Randal O’Toole makes the case that government efforts to protect open space and fund mass transit systems are the real causes of the housing bubble because these government interventions can increase home values. The upshot? We need toll roads,

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privatized transit systems, and an end to zoning and environmental laws that weaken individuals’ rights to do whatever they please with their property. And by the way, “we know that New Deal planning did more to prolong the Depression than to end it.” Well then. Hope they have a sound investment strategy for their \$23.5 million in assets.

The Manhattan Institute

Forget about raising the minimum wage or expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit. Neither can impact poverty in this country because, according to Manhattan Institute Fellow Steven Malanga, “In America, the poor don’t work.” Call the Census Bureau! Someone has disappeared the more than 9 million working poor Americans—and the families they’re trying to raise—from Malanga’s set of statistics. But maybe that doesn’t matter. Malanga, and many of his colleagues at the \$12 million a year Manhattan Institute, are really concerned about a subset of Americans in poverty: “poor girls without a high school education... having children by a man who won’t marry and support them.” Despite welfare reform, some of these single mothers with young children aren’t in the workforce yet. Yet in the Manhattan Institute’s worldview, there’s no point in improving their access to childcare or education and job training either because, in the words of MI *City Journal* editor Andrew Klavan, “beating poverty in America nowadays is largely a matter of personal behavior.” Instead, Klavan suggests making movies that teach the value of staying in school and getting married. Bring your own popcorn.