



BY PETER GOETTLER

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## “Keep Cato Busy Being Born”

The Benefactor Summit held here at Global Freedom HQ in May was the most energizing summit in my eight years at Cato. Honoring Jimmy Lai with the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty—presented by Tiananmen protestor and labor camp survivor Tong Yi and accepted by Jimmy’s son Sebastien—was an inspiring way to kick off the weekend. But it was only the start.

All of us at Cato look forward to when our community comes together. This time it was gratifying to receive such tremendous feedback from the Sponsors in attendance! We heard strong affirmation of Cato’s strategic direction, the Institute’s impact, and our numerous initiatives. We received effusive feedback on all the things your generosity is making possible: the outstanding talent we’ve added, the expanded effort to advance free markets and enterprise, our seasoned and growing outreach team, our innovative programs that are reaching so many young people, and the newly renovated F. A. Hayek Auditorium that’s now a state-of-the-art digital production studio.

Our staff and culture are committed to continuous improvement, working every day to lift Cato to a higher level of performance and impact. This is essential if we’re to see liberty triumph. And it’s a serious responsibility to those whose generous support makes our mission possible: we’ll always work to accomplish more with the resources you entrust to us. As Nobel laureate Bob Dylan famously said, “he not busy being born is busy dying.” We’re looking to keep Cato busy being born.

Those of us at Cato today have inherited an incredibly strong foundation on which to keep building. Decades of generous support from our Sponsors and hard work by dedicated leaders built the Institute and its reputation. As some of those who have built Cato leave their previous positions—allowing a new group of leaders to take the Institute’s mission forward—we recognize our debt to them.

Jim Dorn was Cato’s first hire when the Institute arrived in Washington from San Francisco. A focused and organized scholar, Jim established the *Cato Journal* in 1982 and went on to produce its next 117 issues. Jim made Cato a lonely but important voice speaking out against our fiat money system and in favor of monetary reform, creating the annual Cato Monetary Conference and turning it into a Washington institution. He also

organized the very first conferences on market liberalism ever held in Moscow and Shanghai—before email or the internet!

One thing that has set Cato apart through most of its history is a commitment to realism and restraint in foreign policy, and it was Ted Galen Carpenter who created our program in defense and foreign policy studies. Not only was Ted a prolific scholar—writing or editing 22 books in 35 years—he also sought out, published, hired, and mentored many younger scholars who have gone on to do excellent work at Cato and elsewhere. It was Ted’s steadfast and principled stand that authored what was perhaps Cato’s finest hour: its lonely opposition to the war in Iraq.

In 30 years at Cato, Michael Tanner wrote 10 books on health care, Social Security, big-government conservatism, welfare, and poverty. He joined the Institute just in time to become a vigorous critic of President Clinton’s health care plan. Starting in 1995, he directed Cato’s Project on Social Security Privatization, sparking what Daniel Patrick Moynihan called a “remarkable transition from white papers from libertarian think tanks to the mainstream of policy thinkers.”

And no one has had as big an impact on Cato for as long as David Boaz over his 42 years of dedicated service. David has simultaneously been Cato’s chief intellectual officer, chief quality control officer, and Institute-wide ombudsman. He has been the most diligent—and hence, the most important—guardian of Cato’s adherence to principle and its commitment to nonpartisanship, independence, and excellence. Last year David stepped down as executive vice president and assumed the role of Cato distinguished senior fellow—a title shared by only four others, three of them Nobel laureates.

These colleagues have recently left Cato or stepped down from their management roles, passing the torch to a new generation of leaders to continue Cato’s intellectual leadership and policy impact and to keep that flame of liberty alive for those who come next. The history of Cato, therefore, parallels our own view of U.S. history: established on timeless principles, a recognized debt to the Founding generation, and excitement for the future—a future of freedom and openness that Cato will help write.