



BY DAVID BOAZ

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EDITORIAL

44 Years of *Cato Policy Report*

This is the last issue of *Cato Policy Report* (CPR) after 44 years. In that time, we have presented original articles on policy, history, law, economics, international affairs, and the principles of liberty. We have covered major Cato Institute events, including policy conferences such as “The Search for Stable Money” in 1983—featuring James Buchanan, Karl Brunner, Allan Meltzer, Fritz Machlup, and Anna Schwartz—our conferences in Moscow and Shanghai, and Milton Friedman Prize dinners.

We have published some 301 issues, of which I edited 276 after joining Cato in 1981. Looking back, I remember a wide range of topics and some fascinating essays. The very first issue featured “Social Security: Has the Crisis Passed?” by Carolyn L. Weaver. That was appropriate since reforming the Social Security program became a signature Cato issue that generated books, conferences, and continuing engagement with policymakers who mostly didn’t want to face the problem.

William A. Niskanen, then a member of President Reagan’s Council of Economic Advisers, made his first appearance in *CPR* in May 1983 when he commented on Lawrence H. White’s book *Free Banking in Britain*. I still remember one point he made in his talk: the burden of proof in policy ought to rest with those “who propose restrictions on consensual relations of any kind.” But in practice, the burden of proof is on those who are proposing change—and within the government, on those who propose to reduce government’s discretion.

Two years later, when Niskanen became Cato’s chair, he gave an inaugural lecture, “The Growth of Government.” I remember the way he set out Cato’s distinctive perspective:

We will differ from the dominant political traditions primarily when they try to use the powers of the state to impose their particular values on the larger community. We will oppose contemporary liberals when they fail to distinguish between a virtue and a requirement. We will oppose contemporary conservatives when they fail to distinguish between a sin and a crime.

Nineteen ninety-two was a big year for *CPR*. In successive issues, we published lead articles by P. T. Bauer, later the first recipient of the Milton Friedman Prize; Norman Macrae, the longtime deputy editor of *The Economist*; and the great philosopher Karl Popper. That last was one of

my great accomplishments as editor. I had read that a paper by the ailing Popper had been given at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association. I wrote to the scholar who had presented it for him and then wrote to Popper at his home in New Zealand, and I got permission to publish his paper. In it, he wrote about F. A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and the Mont Pelerin Society, but most especially how Hayek was right to warn that socialist planning could only be implemented “by force, by terror, by political enslavement”—and thus, Popper added, the Soviet Union became an empire ruled by lies.

Over the years, we published other great thinkers: Robert Nozick on why intellectuals hate capitalism, Thomas Sowell on the economics and politics of race, Nat Hentoff on the First Amendment, James Buchanan on constitutional political economy, Deirdre McCloskey on bourgeois virtues, Ronald Coase on China, Steven Pinker on the Enlightenment, and Clarence Thomas’s powerful dissent in the Supreme Court’s 2005 medical marijuana case.

And, of course, most of our own great Cato scholars contributed to *CPR*. Tom G. Palmer wrote on a wide variety of topics—infrastructure, attacks on libertarianism, misconceptions about individualism, and modern threats to liberty. Doug Bandow reported on his trip to North Korea, Julian Sanchez on Edward Snowden’s revelations, Peter Ferrara and Michael Tanner on needed changes to Social Security, Roberto Salinas-León on Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s “fourth transformation” of Mexico, and Clark Neily on “our broken justice system.”

From time to time, we have delved into historical topics, partly because people get much of their understanding of government and policy from history. Jim Powell took aim at Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, while Michael Chapman excoriated Theodore Roosevelt. Brian Domitrovic celebrated the tax revolt of the 1970s and 1980s. George H. Smith pondered what Stanford should teach regarding “Western civilization.” Steven Davies traced how the world became modern.

Editing *Cato Policy Report* all these years has been a great opportunity for me to engage with policy and ideas. I hope the editors of Cato’s new magazine will have an equally stimulating experience.