

Aphorisms

Economical Cogitations

by Daniel B. Klein

Some folks are dissatisfied with free enterprise if it doesn't work perfectly, and satisfied with government if it works at all.

Bribery must stop, you say? Tell it to Schindler.

Affirmative action: Countering prejudice by providing a sound reason for it.

When the circus of politics is finished, the groundskeeper sweeps the litter into a pile and calls it "the law."

The Political Dialectic of Twentieth-Century America: The Conservative believes the government should run education, place a check on vice, fine-tune the economy, promote democracy abroad, and be led by a man in pin stripes. His opponent the Liberal believes the government should run education, place a check on vice, fine-tune the economy, promote democracy abroad, and be led by a man in plaid.

When the anti-capitalist holds profit-hungry business in contempt, he conveniently neglects the fact that business is the paid servant of customers and the served payer of employees.

The democratic faith comes in two varieties, the naïve and the sophisticated. The naïve democrat believes that if everyone would just be nice and participate, as in a town meeting, we can make it all work out. The sophisticated democrat recognizes the tender-minded folly of this view and is ready to face the tough truth: we must enlist qualified experts to make it all work out.

The dirigiste intellectual takes experience with scribblings about a subject for experience with the subject itself.

Is it the will to control that gives birth to the pretense of knowing, or is it the will to know that gives birth to the impulse to control?

Wisdom in economics: refined knowledge of the unknowableness of the economy.

The dispute between two economists over whether or not

the labor market is competitive is usually a dispute over the meaning of competition, just as the dispute between two lovers over whether or not he loves her is usually a dispute over the meaning of love.

Some economists are a riddle. On an issue-by-issue basis they are libertarians seven times out of ten, but when you put it all together you get a Clinton supporter. The answer to this riddle often lies in conjugal consideration.

Liberty is like licorice: some people hate it and some people love it.

The value of safeguarding a man's right to life against unjust force divided by the value of his life itself equals, on average, three hundred thousand.

To work its wonders the principle of individual liberty need not be mythologized, but only upheld. But to be upheld it must be mythologized.

The battle is not one between power and justice, nor between unjust power and just power. The battle is between unjust power and less just power.

Clever leftists miss the point when they contend that individual liberty is "mere" mythology. The point is that it is mythology worth consecrating.

The government's war on smoking is getting so outrageous, it is turning smokers into libertarians and libertarians into smokers.

Good taste favors *laissez faire* even for personal activities that show bad taste.

Laws that prevent the choosing of sin also prevent the choosing of virtue.

If we hold groups rather than individuals accountable, we all end up criminals.

May the socialist enter private industry, and the libertarian, government.