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Socialists Think the World of Cato

By Richard Morin and Claudia Deane

Even in this town full of thinking people, who would have thought the Socialist Party would model its fledgling think tank after the **Cato Institute**, the avowed champion of free-market capitalism and limited government?

"We like to think of this as our Cato Institute," said Greg Pason, national secretary of the Socialist Party USA, in a statement announcing the creation of the **American Socialist Foundation**. "With this new foundation we can hold press conferences, publish books and issue studies and reports on a variety of issues from an inclusive socialist perspective."

Inclusive, indeed. Have the workers of the world suddenly decided to unite with the libertarians? Of course not. "We're being a bit facetious," laughed Shaun Richman, the party's secretary-treasurer. Still, he suggests one similarity: "Cato is contrarian and by our nature so are we."

But Richman also acknowledges that Cato is a visible player in major Washington policy debates -- something the Socialist Party is not, but very much wants to be.

To change that, the socialists are creating a think tank to "focus on contemporary economic and political issues and develop socialist analysis and policies to address them," Richman said. The foundation will be located in New York and will be led by Barbara Garson, an author and the party's 1992 vice presidential candidate.

One of the foundation's first projects will be to create a new model for public broadcasting in the United States. "Socialists favor public ownership of the media. But the British Broadcasting Corporation wouldn't work in America. National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service have very serious limits. Something's got to work," Richman said.

The party will unveil the foundation next month during the planned mega-demonstrations against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

"The movement is large but lacks focus," Richman said. "We want to do some of the thinking for the people in the streets."

A CURE FOR THE HIGH-TECH BLUES: The tech-heavy Nasdaq has tanked, our local tech corridor is shedding employees left and right, and our computers

still crash all the time. What we need is an Information Technology revolution.

Or at least a think tank conference. Fortunately, two are coming up -- just in the nick of time.

The **Progress and Freedom Foundation** is readying for its seventh annual pilgrimage to the Rockies for Aspen Summit 2001, to be held Aug. 19-21.

Among the big names who will speak on topics such as "the IT [Information Technology] meltdown and the coming recovery," and "the implications of ubiquitous broadband" are Hewlett-Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina, Colorado Gov. Bill Owens (R), AT&T President David Dorman, Sun Microsystems CEO Scott McNealy and investment guru George Gilder. FCC commissioners Kathleen Abernathy and Kevin Martin are also on the guest list.

PFF head Jeff Eisenach said interest in the summit is up this year. "I think it is because people are really focused on the question 'what did public policy do to cause the IT recession and what can it do to cure it,' " he said yesterday. "It's part of a larger phenomenon. . . . The demand for economists goes down in good times and up in bad times."

Fees for corporate attendees run \$1,500; for government and charities, \$500.

Meanwhile, **the Economic Strategy Institute** is prepping for an invite-only, "peer-to-peer summit" with the theme "Empowering Innovation for Growth," to be held at the Mayflower Hotel Oct. 4-6. Among the 200 or so business leaders and power wonks expected are the heads of Intel, Corning, Chubb, Compaq, Micron Technology and Xerox, plus Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams and Commerce Undersecretary for Technology Philip Bond.

"There's an anomaly here," said ESI head Clyde Prestowitz. "We all feel in our gut the Internet is just in its infancy. . . . We know we've only scratched the surface, but we're not investing. How can that be?"

At the conference, which will cover not just the Internet but information technology more generally, he hopes the assembled power players can "identify four or five services or product areas that could be real drivers, and then ID what needs to be done to promote them, either by overcoming technical challenges or regulatory issues."

PEOPLE: All sorts of promotions at the **Aspen Institute:** Peggy Clark has moved up to serve as executive vice president for programs; Janet Froetscher is the newly installed chief operating officer; and Amy Margerum was promoted to chief financial and administrative officer.

Caroline Nicholl, former program manager with the D.C. police department and 20-year veteran of British policing, will join the **Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation** next month as co-director for youth and policing programs. While with the District force, Nicholls developed the city's first "John School" -- a program designed to demonstrate the negative effects of prostitution to men arrested for soliciting sex.

The **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies** has tapped Elliott Hall as the new chair of its board of governors, replacing Andrew Brimmer. Hall is a Ford Motor Co. executive.

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