

About The Heartland Institute

from...

Radicals for Capitalism

Not all state and local libertarian think tanks arose from Fisher activism. Chicago's Heartland Institute arose in the early 1980's from a group of local libertarian business men, gathered by one-time Center for Libertarian Studies and Cato board member David Padden as the Loop Libertarian League. They financed local young libertarian Joseph Bast, then publishing one of the last holdovers of small-circulation libertarian zines, *Nomos*.

Staunchly libertarian, Bast realized that to succeed in the finding marketplace with a local focus, he would have to be studiously fusionist, concentrating on the free market issues where most conservatives and libertarians could agree. "The conservatives had the money, and the libertarians had the ideas," he said. After some Illinois success Bast became an Antony Fisher II, creating branch offices throughout the Midwest with funding support from right-wing foundations such as Scaife.

Other foundations from which Bast sought funding were leery of the franchising notion, thinking high-level academics were needed to run a free market think tank. "My motto is, you need to find a used car salesman who's a libertarian—an aggressive, articulate guy who wants to build an organization. Academics are almost uniquely *not* fit to head a think tank. They don't have management or financial skills."

Lack of foundation belief in the affiliate idea made Heartland eventually retreat back to Chicago, where it now works as a set of virtual sinews uniting the policy work of dozens of other local and national market-oriented policy organizations, and circulating that work out to state legislators around the nation in order to maximize the impact of the smaller policy groups.

The disjunction between pro-free market and being pro-business has in the past stymied Heartland's relations with the Illinois business community, especially when Illinois had big-spending Republican governors. Heartland's inevitable attacks on Republican policies would scare off businessmen who needed cordial relationships with the state Republican power structure.

Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Free-Wheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2007), pp. 479-480.